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TRACTS

OF

THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

FIRST SERIES ..... VOL. XI.

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"COME OVER AND HELP US."

A LETTER

TO

REV. GEORGE PUTNAM.

BY E. PEABODY.

PRINTED FOR THE

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A LETTER, &c.

My dear Sir:

When we last had the pleasure of being together, our conversation, as you may remember, turned not a little on the duty laid upon Unitarians to endeavor to propagate a knowledge of their views of religion in those parts of our country where they are not generally known. Since that conversation, time and distance have both separated us; but the subject on which we conversed has grown neither less important in itself, nor less interesting to us. Nay; every addition made to the experience of life, or to the knowledge of men — of their religious wants and trials — discloses more and more its importance. It is this fact, that induces me by means of a letter to revive and continue our conversation. It is not done with the purpose of conveying new thoughts on this subject, but in the hope that by dwelling upon them, the thoughts which we already have may be converted into living and active feelings. That the fire may burn, there must be, not solitary "musing" only, but communion of mind with mind. The brightest coal on the altar, if drawn apart and left alone, will go out. A few insignificant sparks, if brought into contact with each other, will warm and glow and flame and be sufficient to kindle a conflagration.

In the following remarks I shall confine myself to the missionary responsibilities of Unitarians in our own country, and especially as regards the West; intending to consider briefly some of the reasons which have operated to cripple the zeal and efforts of many of our brethren in diffusing their views; — some of the reasons for effort in this matter; — and some of the modes in which such efforts may be most profitably made.

But before our brethren will enter heartily and unitedly into this great field of labor, there are certain objections to be removed, which rise up like a wall between some of them and the vineyard in which they ought to be at work.

Among those of our denomination, there are not a few who, from mistaken views of the subject (at least so far as action goes) take no interest in extending a knowledge of what they believe to be the truths of the Gospel. They see no use in it. The language of their practice is, — Stay at home and take care of yourself and only of yourself. They do not see that for all practical purposes, one set of religious opinions is not as good as another.

It is obvious to remark on this state of mind, that *so thought not the Lord Jesus Christ.* Such, too, is not the lesson that we learn from the Bible, nor from the Providence of God, nor from the relations which he has instituted between man and man. Almighty God deemed truth — religious truth — of so much worth to man, that he caused it to be taught, though at its planting it was to be watered by the blood of his Son, and to be nourished by the toils and tears and blood of Apostles and Martyrs for years and ages after. And is it indeed left for us to discover that after all, there was a mistake in this matter!—

that it is not worth the cost to be at much trouble in diffusing truths, which were introduced into the world at such sacrifices!

The infinite worth of christianity to man, arises from the fact that it discloses the *truth* on subjects that to him are of infinite moment. The worth of our religion is diminished, just in proportion as it is corrupted with error. The same principle therefore that made it imperative on the apostles to teach christianity at first to those who knew it not, makes it obligatory on all who receive it, to endeavor to make and keep it pure.

Many are restrained from exertion by a palsying dread of sectarianism.* They will do nothing to spread views which they believe represent truly the doctrines of Christ, for fear of there being something sectarian about it. Rather than have it thought that they could be infected with any thing of sectarianism, they will let what they honor as the truth of God be covered up and misinterpreted and perverted to the certain danger and possible ruin of human souls. "They are so afraid of being sectarists that they hardly dare to be christians."

It is singular how much more tender men's consciences are on this subject than in the days of Paul and Peter and John! These men had so little of this fear, that they did not hesitate to disturb every part of the world with new opinions.

Afraid of sectarianism! Certainly, a very wholesome fear. But are these men afraid of sectarianism in govern-

* For a fuller discussion of this topic, see a Tract, on "The Wants of the West," by Rev. Wm. G. Eliot; and for all the subjects of any importance discussed in these pages, I would refer my readers to the very interesting Reports of Rev. Mr Briggs, Gen. Sec. of the A. U. A.

ment, in political economy, in any thing in which they feel an interest? Why so fearful then in religion? Because they are *indifferent?*

No. Some of the most religious men are possessed—for it is possession—with this morbid horror of sectarianism. What is the reason? Their difficulty lies in mistaking the nature of the sin which they would avoid.

Sectarianism, like self-love, has a good and a bad sense, and they are often confounded together. He is a sectarian in the bad sense, who wishes to spread opinions, not because he thinks them *true* and *useful*, but because they are *his*,—who wants power,—who wants to make his creed and himself conspicuous,—who wants to enlarge the borders of his sect because it is his sect. Such an one is a sectarist in the bad sense. But there is a good sense of the word.

Every one, who for truth's sake and for the sake of its influence, endeavors to introduce a new truth into the world, or to revive an old one, or to propagate one to which the world is hostile, is a sectarist. Galileo was a sectarist. Newton was a sectarist. Washington was a sectarist, one who by the sword sought and won a place in the world for those primal truths on which civil liberty depends. Luther was eminently a sectarist. Nay, did I not seem to compare him with man, (and why should this prevent my referring to him who is our guide?) I would even refer to him, who was the founder of that sect much spoken against, first called christians at Antioch. Here we see the difference between a praiseworthy and a vicious sectarian. The sectarian in the bad sense, to repeat what I have before said, thinks only of *his* opinions, *his* creed, his own notoriety and influence, the spread

and triumph of his sect. The sectarian in the good sense is thinking only of truth, *its* author, *its* beneficent influence. The good Samaritan of the soul, he wishes that others may share that which has blest himself. And though he must act with others and give and gain strength by associating himself with others, still he labors not for himself or his sect, but for truth and its blessed fruits and the good of his brethren. He cares not if he and his sect die and are forgotten, so that truth spring from their grave to bless mankind. Such sectarianism God looks on and blesses.

But it is said; the great part of religious sectarists belong to that body of whom it is said, that "they compass sea and land to make one proselyte," caring only for the triumph of themselves and their sect, and utterly heedless of truth or its benign effects. Very well; it may be so. But if I were addressing those who make this assertion the excuse for their indifference, I would say; Do you the good that these men do, from a better principle. Let not their doing what is right from a wrong motive, prevent your doing it from a right one. Let not their committing sin on one side, cause you to commit as great a one on the other.

The truth is, that wherever thought is not utterly dead and men not utterly selfish, there must be sectarianism in some form or other. And for the plain reason that there will be difference of opinion and efforts to propagate opposite opinions. And imperfect and as subject to error as men's minds are, it is well that it is so. It is by the collision of hostile thought and effort, that Truth is struck out, lightning-like, to illuminate the world. It is the motive that makes the difference between the good

and bad sectarian. Let not men trouble themselves, if they are troubled in this matter, about other men's motives. God, not man, is their judge. Only let each man take care of his own purposes. Let each man look to his own heart and see that he aids in spreading divine truth, from good motives, and he need not trouble himself about sectarianism.

But I dwell on this too long. As I write, the difference between a good and a wicked sectarianism seems so plain, that I cannot think that many who are truly christians should mistake one for the other. Allow me for a moment to refer to another objection which many of our brethren make against efforts to disseminate our views.

It is said ; "Men are not saved by their intellectual opinions. Feelings, motives, the governing principles of action are all and only essential. No matter how a man's intellect is, provided his heart be right. And, as a matter of fact, you find right religious feelings and right principles of action in members of every sect."

Undoubtedly this is all true. I have learned from what I cannot but consider a useful experience, that christian feelings are not monopolized by any single sect. I say it with a thankful heart, for I consider it one of the great blessings which our heavenly Father has permitted me to enjoy, that I have known as friends, those who were christians in the truest and noblest sense, (if christians there are in the world,) of almost every sect into which our country is divided.

But does the fact that christian feelings and principles exist in all sects show that opinions are unimportant? Let it be granted that very different opinions may produce or accompany like feelings. Does it follow that all

opinions will equally accompany or produce them? There was one righteous man in Sodom. Christ found a Roman Centurion that put Israel to shame; and both of us have seen more than one infidel whose character was far more luminous with christian graces, than many of their nominally believing neighbors. But surely this does not prove that the religious opinions received in Sodom, or even those received by Lot, or a faith in the Roman Pantheon, or a scepticism about all religion, is of as much use as a true faith in the gospel of Christ? Surely this does not show that religious opinions are unimportant.

Opinions not important! Opinions rule the world, and each individual in it — affection — wish — will. Opinion plied the bloody knife of the guillotine. Opinion built the walls of the inquisition. Opinion buttresses the hoary despotisms, and consecrates the blood-cemented religious institutions of Asia. False opinions sink and keep men in degradation; true opinions raise them out of the gulf and the darkness into the day.

Do not many who speak of the primary importance of right religious feelings — a heart right with God — and of the comparative unimportance of opinions, forget the intimate connection which our Maker has established between feeling and opinion? Does not the latter determine the former? Before men can have right feelings towards God, must they not have right views of what God is? Before they will have right feelings towards men, must they not have right notions of the relations between man and man? Right feelings are born out of right opinions. In ancient times, in almost every nation, the words *stranger* and *enemy* were held to be synonymes. What has wrought the reform in christendom

which now causes the stranger to be looked on, not as an enemy, but as one having a claim on us for hospitable care? Opinion. The introduction into the world of the truth that men are all brethren of one family, the children of one God, heirs of the same eternity.

True, there is in man a religious principle, as there is a social one, and under all circumstances it will be more or less developed. But the character of that development depends very much on the man's religious opinions. False opinions dwarf and deaden it. They act as a Chinese mould, to distort and benumb it. True opinions stretch over it the genial sky, beneath which it can spring and grow with a healthy growth.

But there are others of our friends, though I think the number is small, who take a different ground. They say that truth cannot be spread at all, certainly not with profit, by foreign influence; — that there must be preparation in the minds of those who receive it; — that it must spring up in a great degree spontaneously, each individual being in some sort a discoverer; and that every successful reformer does not so much teach new truths as give expression to those which already lie in unquiet sleep — alive, but unuttered — in the hearts of those to whom he speaks.

There is enough truth in this to give it a degree of speciousness; but so far as it is true, it affords no objection to any missionary enterprise of which I am now speaking. If it were strictly true, Newton should have been dumb, and Wickliffe should have kept heaven's truth cloistered in his heart, and they who have thought that the very winds which wafted the ashes of Huss over the valleys of Bohemia were hallowed by their burden, must

henceforth correct their opinions, and think of him as one who was led into a foolish undertaking by a good purpose, but a weak head. This sybaritic doctrine — this convenient plea for doing nothing to relieve men of that evil which is the fountain head of all other evils, error, — should be cast out of the world. It accords not with our Saviour's command; "Go ye and teach all nations." The world is surely as well prepared for the gospel now as it was when this command was given.

Besides, though there must be preparation for the reception of every new truth which is taken into the mind from childhood up, yet how is it ever propagated except by foreign influence. In the spirit of the objection to which we have referred, every mind is foreign to every other mind. Shall the parent therefore not teach a child, but wait for the spontaneous growth of truth? Nothing can be more foreign to another than the schoolmaster's mind to his pupil. Shall the schoolmaster no longer be abroad in the land? Shall the orator be silent, and the philosopher cast the sheets on which he has toiled into the flames? "There must be preparation for truth in the mind of the recipient!" Certainly. But how prepare men for the reception of moral truths? By presenting again and again the truths themselves to their minds. This — the being brought to look steadily at a moral truth — is the preparation needed for understanding it.

But if God has honored you with that greatest of honors — the being a steward and dispenser to the world of a great Truth, — is the fact that the world is unprepared for its reception, any excuse for your inactivity? May you therefore put your talent into the earth? No; go and prepare the world. Prepare at least as many

minds as you can for the reception of what you cannot yet teach them.

But are they not mistaken, at least so far as our own country is concerned, who imagine that they possess truths which others cannot appreciate? Who are those who are so far in advance of their age, that they, though they let their light shine, because of the distance cannot be seen? Surely they are few. Great men are not so elevated above their fellow creatures as to be out of sight. Indeed, the greatest are the greatest for no other reason than that in them, more than in others, the wisdom of their time converges. The greatest philosopher but expresses a little more clearly, truths that have been elaborating in the universal mind of his land.

Especially, (to introduce again an idea to which we have just now referred) does this hold good of *moral truth.* Goodness is the key that unlocks difficulties in morals. Hence it is our Saviour says, that he who does the will of God shall understand the doctrine. The greatest philosopher does not know one moral truth which he cannot easily make intelligible, if he will but use proper words, to the most humble and ignorant *good* man of his acquaintance. Strange would it be if it were not so, when the highest moral truths are to be found in the gospel of Christ, and one peculiar characteristic of that gospel is its suitableness to the poor and ignorant.

But I weary you and myself in answering objections, which, unless we had heard them, we could hardly believe had ever been made in earnest. It is more agreeable to look at the reasons for propagating our views.

And, firstly, do we set a sufficiently high estimate on

the importance of christian truth? In combating the error, that belief, as such, is essential to salvation, many have gone to the other side, and thought it of no consequence what a man believed. The mistake of the latter is greater than that of the former. Though belief, as such, is not essential to salvation, they who have thought it was, have erred, not in the value they have set upon truth, (they have valued it none too highly,) but only as to the mode in which it is valuable. It is needless to describe the connexion between truth and the intellect, conscience, affections and life. God blesses the world through truth. It is his sunshine falling on the moral world, without which all that lives at all, wilts and grows pale and feeble and fruitless. To know truth, is not indeed, necessarily, to be good; but God has appointed that truth shall be the vital element in which goodness is to grow. It is the soul's atmosphere—its life—without which its healthful functions cease and all becomes dead or diseased.

He, therefore, who imparts to another a single new spiritual truth, livingly, or quickens into life an old one in a single soul, has done that soul a good that cannot be measured. That truth will never lose its power to bless. Once fairly introduced alive, it will work silently to reform and assimilate all things to itself. Once kindled up in the mind, and it is no more to be extinguished than a sun. Nay; when suns and stars have passed away like a burnt scroll, truth — and through truth, the soul also — will be growing more and more vigorous. Hence as forcibly as sublimely, our Saviour says, "Though heaven and earth pass away, my words shall not pass away." His kingdom is one of truth and is therefore everlasting.

But I will so trespass on your good nature as to adduce

some particular cases in which the immediate worth of truth to human happiness or human virtue may appear. And I would that our brethren could be asked individually whether, seeing that multitudes on multitudes are as I describe individuals to be, they ought not to make greater effort than has ever yet been made to dissemmate views that may save those who sink in the waves of despair, or doubt, or indifference.

Here is a man, religious, devout; but his creed presents God and his laws in such a light, that he looks up with terror at one and with a forced resignation to the other. The horizon of the Future is to his eye lurid with threatenings. Not more entirely did the sword of the archangel shut the way to Paradise, than do the damnatory doctrines of Calvin seem to intercept and close against him the road to heaven. The man has no hope in religion, or if he has, it comes only in spasms between long intervals of apathetic fear. He is ever exhorting his soul "to fear the vengeance of an angry God." If such a man is nervous, excitable, timid, self-distrustful, the fear of God may press on the healthy action of the mind till like Pascal, he approaches, or like Cowper, reaches the borders of insanity.

Could you, I would say to our brethren, though it should cost not a little effort and trouble, by giving this man truer views of religion, make him happier—make him a *child* instead of a *slave* of God—would you not think it worth the while—would you not think it a duty and a privilege to make that effort?

Or we might take the case of a still larger class—of those indifferent to religion. The most striking, or at least the most painful feature, in the religious condition

of our country, is, not its skepticism or fanaticism, nor its freedom, nor its errors, but its indifference. Every where it is business before religion. Every where it is the corn or the cotton, or speculations in land or in lumber, the rate of freights or exchanges, or some of the thousand operations of business which are hurrying men on in hot haste through the paths of life. Men are ready to obey so much of the command as says, "Six days shalt thou labor," — there is no sluggishness here — but how many go with lagging feet on the seventh day, to cast a few forced thoughts on the altar of God! From how many souls do even these few thoughts seem to die away as quickly as the echo of their footsteps when they leave the aisles of the church.

Whence comes this religious indifference, which the Christian mourns over in every part of our country? Not all of it, certainly, but very much of it, from religious error. Multitudes are indifferent, because religious truth has never approached them in a form suited to rouse into action the better principles of their nature. Religion has come to them, garbed in horrid weeds that hid her true features, and speaking in a ghastly voice that did not belong to her, and they have shrunk from her, (and what wonder!) as if she were a phantom conjured up from the abyss, rather than an angel sent down from heaven. Take the case of those who have seen nothing but Calvinism, and who have thus identified it with pure Christianity. There are multitudes, whether justly or not I discuss not here, who see nothing in Calvinism, as a system, which is not degrading to a man and dishonorable to God. Their best feelings revolt from it. The system has no sympathies with their nature — it touches no good

affection — it contributes to the growth of no good prinple. To them it appears to introduce new notions of right and wrong utterly hostile to the dictates of conscience, and thus, to be alike subversive of reason and the moral sense. It is in this way lifted off from the mind. The bonds which should connect religion, vitally, with the intellect and moral nature are severed. Instead of being drawn to it by their affections and sense of duty, they are held to it, if held at all, only by their fears. However this system may be urged on one of this class, it can only be brought into contact with, not made to penetrate into his soul. It is ever something outside — something apart from him — not warming religion into life within him, but touching his soul, as icicle touches icicle, freezing it ever into colder indifference. Calvinism rises between him and Christianity, as a polar mountain rises before one who dwells in its deepest shadow, shutting out the sun, and forbidding the day-spring from on high to visit him except in cold and dim reflections.

Do I not speak the truth, in saying that many, very many, of the most intelligent, upright, and influential men in our land, are in this most unhappy spiritual state? Can any thing be more important than that this vast evil, so fruitful in other evils, should be remedied? How is it to be done? Not by haranguing on the wickedness of indifference; they were not led into it by the love of sin. Not by threats and denunciations. Such things will not touch the cause of their indifference. It must be shown to them that the monstrous thing offered to them as Christianity, is not Christianity. You must remove the corruptions of Christianity, and disclose its real features. Difficult, almost like the raising of the

dead, will it be to awake men from the settled indifference of years; it may rarely, perhaps, be done at all; but if done, it must be, so far as human agency is concerned, by the presentation of christian *truth.*

And if truth could soften a heart which error has thus hardened, is there any one who would not think it a blessed, a divine work, to carry truth to it? Who would not go far and do much to save one such soul alive?

Others, by the corruptions of Christianity, are driven into infidelity; or if not into absolute infidelity, into vague doubts about the truth of our religion, which ultimately cripple its power over them. Not a little of the infidelity, of which so much is said in our country, has this origin. Men arrive at it by a short process. They become skeptics, not from the want of any historical or external evidence to support the truth of Christianity; but from supposing that the Bible contains doctrines utterly inconsistent with truths and principles, which to doubt, is to distrust the foundations of all evidence. They are told and believe, that the doctrines of the Trinity, Total Depravity, Election and Reprobation are in the Scriptures. These, they feel and say, cannot be true, and in rejecting them reject the Scriptures, which, they are taught, contain them. They may have been unfaithful in not examining the Bible for themselves, to see whether these doctrines, which are a stumbling-block to them, are there or not; but their misfortune is none the less on that account. Their doubts are none the less real, because they are without real foundation, nor have they less power in robbing them of the Christian's peace and hope. They shut out the light of heaven from their minds. They arch over, like a sky of brass, between their souls and

God. They deprive them of the supports of religion, its guidance, its consolations. And often, by time, such men become fixed in a habit of skepticism that rejects from the mind a purer faith when it is found. O! many, many there are, when standing by the death-bed of dear friends, — nay, in the common trials of life, in hours of withdrawal from the world and worldly things, who mourn in bitterness of soul for that faith which they see others enjoy, but which they cannot possess.

To show how far the blight of religious error may extend, when it thus fills the mind with skeptical doubts, we may take what is, so far as woman is concerned, an extreme and rare case, though it is not of such rare occurrence among men. The wife of such a one as we have described, who has for years slept on his arm and confided in his stronger mind, and almost from the necessity of the case, as far as her woman's heart could, drunk in his doubts, is with him. And their children have grown up at their side, and all have made one family of love.

But, sad sight — one of them sickens. The happy child, which but yesterday came bounding to its mother's arms, and hid itself in her bosom, and then fled away, with its glowing face turned back, laughing as it fled — so joyous, so buoyant, so full of elastic health, is now lying pale on its pillow. Softly moves the mother over the carpeted floor — noiselessly she draws the curtains to shut out the intruding sunbeams — tenderly she watches over it, watches with prayers and tears while it sleeps, yet on its waking, forgetting herself, forcing down her anxieties, meets its confiding look with the quick, cheering, fond mother's smile. And the day goes, and the

night wanes into the silence and chill of morning, and mother and father watch by the bed where the loved soul hovers between life and death. But all care is vain. The silver cord is broken. That change, most awful, has taken place; — in the chamber where they stand, the living soul has departed and death remains.

And who shall tell their sorrow, as they see before them their child's features frozen into the monumental sleep that knows no waking? At such an hour is the triumph of Christianity. It is in the chamber of death that the Christian most feels the presence and reality of spiritual life. The very grief he feels, unveils to his soul the desolate cry that rises out of his heart, and discloses to him a Providence and a better world. *By the side of the grave he looks up to heaven.*

But alas for the unbeliever! To him this parting is an eternal parting. Memory fills up the past, but the future is empty. How much more dreadful where unbelief has also touched the mother! — (and I have been asked by a mother under such circumstances, in a piercing tone of despair, a tone that will haunt me to my dying day; — "Is there, is there a future life?") She recalls each look, each tone, each affectionate smile, but it is all buried up in the grave. She has no hope. The grave — the grave — thither go down her affections till she would gladly lie down by her child's side and sleep there forever. The Christian's hope, life, immortality, reunion, she craves, longs, prays to possess, and, miserable woman, she cannot.

Would not he who wept at the grave of Lazarus, and restored the widow's son to life, deem it a noble work to carry consolation to these wounded hearts? And how

is this to be done? By carrying to them christian truth. Philosophy is dumb when the mourner asks for consolation. Skepticism is but another name for despair. The gospel, and the gospel only, has real sources of consolation for the bereaved. If then the corruptions of Christianity have made many reject it altogether, and if the gospel could do no other good than soothing the grief of the afflicted, would not this of itself be sufficient reason for all that ever has been done, or ever will be done, to promote the spread of christian truth? Let those who have known what sorrow is, and felt too the power of their faith to console, answer the question.

But there is not merely one who, because of religious error, trembles in the midst of unhealthy fears, or loses the sanctions of virtue and consolations of sorrow. O no!—could all the inward struggles, the doubts, the terrors, the mockings, the despair, the irreligious lives of the young, the dead indifference of the old, which proceed from religious error, find utterance in one voice, it would stun the ear of the world.

I do not mean to say that all of the religious indifference, or despair, or doubt, in our country, nor even the chief part, has been occasioned by false views of theology; still less do I suppose that true views of religion would rescue from this state all, or even the larger part of those who have been brought into it through the influence of false views; but still, after making all deductions, there are enough injured by mistaken notions of Christianity, and enough to be benefited by correct ones, to warrant any exertions that our brethren can make in the diffusion of a true theology.

It may be objected, that the vast majority of men do not feel any such difficulties as we suppose — that they live and die under the prevailing creeds in the full exercise of christian faith and hope. We grant the truth of the objection. We rejoice that it is true.

But setting apart all these, there are still multitudes in every part of our country who do feel these difficulties. So far as they are concerned, prevailing religious errors and the difficulties that grow out of them, surround Christianity with a repelling atmosphere that prevents their souls approaching near enough to be warmed and blessed by its sacred influences. We need not seek to make one convert from any other sect; there are enough who are converts to no sect to engage all our interest and attention. We need not interfere with those who are benefited by the ministrations of other denominations; there is enough to be done, without doing this.

I would expand this topic, for it seems to me an important one, and present it under a somewhat different aspect.

The idea that I would urge, is, that there is a great body of men in our land, who if they are ever brought under the influences of Christianity, must be so through the medium of that form in which we receive it. I need not dwell on the reasons, for the fact itself will not be questioned. The remark, in the sense in which I make it, holds good of every sect. Each has its own field of labor. There is a certain class which can be now reached by Methodists alone. There is another large class over whom, for the present at least, the Catholic church only can exert a religious influence. Another class is influenced most beneficially by Episcopalians; another by the

Christians; and without referring to any more, there is another class who will listen to that mode in which we are accustomed to present divine truth, and to no other. This class is a large one. It is also an influential one. It is one whose zeal or indifference in religion, whose faith or whose skepticism, must exert great influence for good or for evil on the religious condition of our country. We need not hunt over the world for proselytes. Amongst this class is our place of labor. It is our peculiar field, and even now too large for the number of laborers that we can send into it. Other sects are laboring, each in its appropriate part of the great vineyard. It is for Unitarians to occupy and cultivate theirs. Let them do their part, which if left undone by them, will not be done at all, in evangelizing the world. Those most afraid of the sectarian and proselyting spirit cannot object to the work here proposed; and they who desire to see the power of religion over men's hearts and consciences increased, cannot but regard it as one of the holiest labors in which we can be employed.

I do not mean to say that those to whom I refer are now Unitarians, for multitudes have hardly heard that name, and multitudes more know nothing of our views. But it is a class composed of men, who never can be Calvinists in any form of Calvinism — who have no sympathies with the sects around them — who will never be drawn to Christianity by their preaching, and will often be repelled from it by the doctrines which they hear, — who in short must become acquainted with different views from those to which they are accustomed, or Christianity will be to their souls but a name. I do not suppose that all, or nearly all of them will become Unitarians. But

explain to them our views of the gospel, and many of them, without becoming Unitarians, will have doubts and difficulties removed, and many more will say; "Thus have I felt and thought!" You have but given language to what before lay unuttered in their hearts. You have brought their intellects into accordance with Christianity, and this is the first step towards bringing their hearts under its power.

And the reason for immediate action in the newly settled parts of our country, is as great on the ground we are now considering, as on any other. Now is the time to do good, and if we suffer it to pass, ten times the exertion will not produce a tithe of the fruits. The class of which I speak is made up of intelligent and conscientious men. Without acknowledging the power of religion over themselves, they yet see that it is essential to human welfare. They are not backward in supporting according to their means, whatever seems useful to society. Though deriving no personal good from religious institutions, yet for the public good they will contribute to and become associated with the religious societies in their neighborhood. The long lack of any thing that meets their own spiritual wants will end in their being indifferent to all religion; and multiplied social ties, united with the love of peace, will destroy their disposition to listen to different views. Other sects will do them no good, and the time when those of our faith might have done good is past. While we have procrastinated, the opportunity of usefulness has gone by. This view of the subject, which I have been last considering, seems to me the most free from objections, the most just, the most important of all. Would our brethren but dwell upon it, I am confident, I am certain,

that with heart and hand they would unite to spread abroad those views, which they believe, which they feel in their own hearts, are the truths of God and mighty for the salvation of souls.

There are many other general considerations, which should urge us on with heart and voice, to diffuse far and wide, what we believe to be correct views of religion. But I leave these general considerations, to dwell a little on some of those peculiar circumstances which may afford reasons for inducing our brethren in New England to turn their thoughts more to the Valley of the Mississippi, as furnishing a wide field for most useful exertion.

There is one leading and peculiar reason why the Unitarians of New England should send the voice of the preacher into the West, which finds its authority not only in the conscience, but in the affections. I will illustrate what I mean by a fact. Not long since I happened to be with our mutual friends —— and —— in the Protestant burying ground in New Orleans. Struck by the frequent sight of familiar names, the thought struck us to ascertain the number from our native New England, laid away in that receptacle of the dead. We found that of all those of whose birthplace record was made, a fraction more than one fourth were from New England. All the other States of the Union and all other sources of emigration, Germany, France, England, Ireland, had contributed but three out of four of this number. Of these New England emigrants, the larger number had died between twenty-one and thirty. In the other large towns of the Mississippi Valley, or at any rate in those towns situated north of the Ohio river, the proportion of inhabitants of New England origin is greater than in New Orleans. And

most who go West are in youth, leaving a crowded home, with limited means, to seek their fortunes. At a time when the blood is hot, and passion strong, and experience yet to be learned, and virtuous feelings not yet ripened into virtuous principles, they leave the restraints of home behind them, and are thrown among strangers to find temptations fearfully increased and the moral aids in resisting them as fearfully diminished. Will the New England parent picture his son in some Western town — with little knowledge of the world and its dangers — among strangers that heed little whether he stand or fall — with no friends but those he makes himself—with little society, save that of other young men — with many tempting tongues, to entice and no guardian eye to watch and guardian voice to warn; tempted by lonely hours, and the craving for fellowship and excitement, by new forms and customs, by the desire to make himself agreeable to the chance companion of the hour, and sometimes by the prospect of sudden gain, and far more often by long, unoccupied months and years in which business delays to come — will the New England parent — will the ten thousand New England parents whose children are, or will be in the West, consider this, and doubt whether they shall keep around their children those religious influences, which, next to the parental presence, form the best safeguard of the young? Will they send out their children to labor in the workshop of Mammon, and not send with them the church of God?

"But why need we trouble ourselves in this matter," it is said, "they will find churches wherever they go." Perhaps they may, perhaps not. But suppose that they do. You would rather that they should attend on the ministra-

tions of that church in whose faith they have been educated, and in which they have sat and listened and prayed with you. But though you care nothing about it, your children will. Distance, absence, the fond memory of home, will invest the faith of their parents with a new sacredness. It will be long (would you have it otherwise?) before your son will feel any real interest in a church unlike that in which his parents, his brothers and sisters and kindred worship. Though there be other churches, he will attend little, often not at all. If he does attend, it will be with the feeling that he does not belong where he attends. He will have no vital bonds uniting him with what is to his heart, an alien church. And if he attends no church, need I tell you, christian parent, that to your child, the Sabbath with its unemployed hours, will be the most dangerous day of the week?

"But there will be churches where our children may attend." Are you so certain of this? You pronounce on yourselves a sentence of shame, if you are certain of it. Suppose that the Presbyterian and the Methodist and other classes of Christians should say the same thing. Suppose that they — ostrich-like — should leave their children on the desert, to the accidental care of strangers? Where then would be the churches at which your children might worship? Surely you would not be more neglectful than others of the spiritual wants of your offspring? Of your offspring I say; for what parent in New England, rich or poor, can make it certain, can even think it probable, that one or more of his children will not make his home in the West.

"But let the West, as we have done, provide its own churches and ministers." Very well. A vast proportion

of the West has done and will do this. But could I address our christian brethren in New England, I would say that as Christians, there is still much for you to do. I speak, however, not on the ground of mercantile or legal obligation, but of a duty which has its foundation in christian sympathy and benevolence. What is the real condition of the West? Within our own remembrance, not cities only, but States have risen up in the middle of the wilderness. And of what materials composed? Of emigrants. Of emigrants from every quarter of the world; mostly young, with an abundance and more than abundance of enterprise and mental activity, but disconnected from each other in sympathy, habits, and often in interest. Talent, activity, enterprise, enthusiasm; — of these things there is enough in this Valley. But for what do the young, who rush in here in tides, come? To seek their fortunes. To struggle on and up in the world. Will they be likely while they are yet poor, loosely connected with each other in towns of yesterday, absorbed each in his own business, to think of their spiritual wants as much as they ought? In many places the population is so scattered that the means are wanting to provide churches and ministers. Coming, then, as multitudes do, from New England, and leaving behind them kindred, friends, acquaintances; carrying with them the religious associations of their native land; is it wonderful that they look to New England for aid in building up their churches? Is it singular that the child should look to the parent? Will New England, who in her early years was not independent, but looked to her friends in the parent country for ministers of the gospel and for aid in establishing institutions of learning and religion, will New England,

thus aided in her childhood by her friends, hesitate to respond to the call of her children?

Our churches have, as a body, taken little interest in missionary enterprises of any kind. This neglect has had a deleterious influence on themselves. For their own sake, we ought to desire to see all of our churches exhibit more zeal in spreading abroad the truths and holy influences of the gospel. If for no other reason, we should desire it, that they may grow in goodness and strength at home.

I think it is hazarding nothing to say, that the church which never allows its sympathies to go actively beyond the circle of its own interests, will itself inevitably decay; — first, in piety, and then in the unity, interest and number of its members. And the reason is very easily told. The first and great law of moral progress in the individual (and the law holds good as to churches, since they are made up of individuals) is, in general terms, that *he becomes good by doing good.* By a most beautiful and beneficent adaptation — more beautiful than those so much dwelt on in the physical world — our Maker has made the moral growth of the *individual*, to be mainly dependent on *social* usefulness. There is no mode in which so quickly to ruin one's self, as to think only of self. No place is so unpropitious for the growth of virtue, as the cell of the hermit. And as surely as a christian church puts itself in the position of a hermit in this world, filled as it is with error and want and woe, — as surely as its members go to church only to pray for themselves, and do nothing which has not their own personal good in view as the object and centre, — they may listen to preaching and pray and talk of duty and spirituality and of the

worth of the human soul, but their church will grow feeble and wither away. Do I not describe what has happened again and again, when I say, that in that church piety will grow cold, and its outward show of prosperity will depend on fashion, or the personal popularity of its minister? And soon this will not be sufficient. The aged will observe the institutions of religion, many of them, only from habit, and the young, grown as they think, wiser than their fathers, will go to church only to hear an eloquent sermon and not for devotion — go to it in short as a respectable place of Sabbath amusement. It is a sad, but a true picture. Piety towards God will not abide in that church in which the love of man is not alive and actively manifesting itself. There is no way in which a feeble church will so quickly grow up and become strong, as for its members to unite together in objects of benevolence; no way by which a strong church will so soon grow weak, as by thinking only of its own spiritual good.

But, it is said, there are objects of beneficence enough in the precincts of every church, without its members going farther to seek them. There may be, for certain kinds of beneficence, but not for the highest kind. Is it enough for a rich church to give of its corpulent abundance to purchase a few books for a Sunday school library, or to supply with crusts a few poor decrepid pensioners on its bounty, that linger about its doors? No: it is not enough. The highest and noblest work of charity is forgotten. The noblest benevolence — and let us never forget it — is to diffuse christian *truth* through the world. If it be a good work to feed the body with bread, it is a still nobler one to feed the soul with truth. And such

must be the first work of the church, if it would imitate the Master and Lord of the church. The narrowest bigot in the world is not he who thinks his opinions of infinite importance and strives to propagate them accordingly, but he who thinks that truth is of no importance. Is it not a strange spectacle that many seem to confound liberality of opinion with indifference to the diffusion of that which is the light of the world — the life and salvation of the soul — TRUTH!

We all acknowledge that he who would have a generous and benevolent, heart, must practise benevolence in his life. We are benevolent therefore, not only for the good of others, but that our own souls may swell out and grow with more generous feelings. But we are too apt to forget that there are many kinds of benevolence, and that each single kind bears only its own peculiar fruits in our hearts. He who gives money to supply the bodily wants of others, does a noble work. It expands and enlarges his soul. It makes him sympathetic towards the wants of the *body*, but towards those only. He who from benevolence is courteous and kind in his demeanor towards others, does a good work. He has his all-sufficient reward — a heart sympathetic with the present *feelings* of others. He acquires a kind and gentle thoughtfulness of feeling. It is a lovely spirit that he has gained. But let him who sees that the suffering and the sins which darken the world have their origin — a vast proportion at least — in error, and that to remove error is the only way to do permanent good, — let such an one strive according to his means, strive from benevolent feelings, to diffuse truth, and he will have his peculiar reward, and the noblest reward of all. And what is it? The more intimate appre-

ciation of the worth of the same truths in his own soul. He will see their importance more plainly, and feel their power more in himself, and they will quicken within him as if he had never heard of them before, and grow mighty and regenerate his own soul with a new life. In endeavoring to communicate truth to others from a feeling of benevolence, he will find it becoming vital in himself. Such is the blessed reward of this kind of benevolence, and it results not from chance, but from a law of our nature.

In considering the sphere of usefulness opened to Unitarians in the West, it will be asked; What can be done? and how can it be done?

In answering the first of these questions, and to show that there is opportunity for exciting a useful influence, I will refer to what has already been accomplished by our friends, with little aid, and against many obstacles. Seven years ago, there was, with the exception of Pittsburgh, where there was a small chapel, not one Unitarian church, not one Unitarian minister, and but three Unitarian societies in the whole Mississippi valley. These societies were at Meadville, Pa., Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. They were all small, lately gathered, not having permanent preachers, and but just struggling into being. At that time, all the Unitarians known as such, in the Western country, would not have filled one of the ordinary sized churches in Boston. Now, from Buffalo to Mobile, there is scarcely one of the most important towns in which there is not a Unitarian society formed, and scarcely a village in the West, especially north of the Ohio, in which there are not Unitarians. In several places where at that time our faith had not been heard of

except from its foes, churches are now built and ministers settled. A monthly periodical is published in Louisville, under the care of Rev. Mr Clarke, which has reached the third volume, whose subscription list is constantly increasing, and has been more than tripled since the second number was issued. A large majority of the subscribers are in the West, and from almost every part of the West. There is a hope and the prospect of being able within one or two years at the farthest to establish a Theological school. And what is most encouraging of all, although it may seem but a small thing to you, there are now five or six Missionaries of our faith, sent out to the West, and mainly supported by the American Unitarian Association. I say it is most encouraging, because it shows a radical change in the sympathies and views of our brethren at the East. Besides these missionaries, Mr Briggs, the General Secretary of the Association, has spent the winter here, and his presence and counsels have strengthened our hands and encouraged our hearts. In spite of the most fragile health, he has labored indefatigably, in gathering churches, in building those up already partially gathered, in preparing the way for others by preaching or by obtaining information, and by bringing Unitarians scattered widely about into an acquaintance with each other. We had long greatly desired that he would come amongst us and survey this part of the vineyard. We expected much from his visit, and have not been disappointed in its good fruits. Those fruits already begin to appear, and what is more, we know that now there is one in that Association, who, from personal and extended observation, knows our wants, and how much good may be done in this region. From his visit, I believe, will date a new and rapid

progress of our views in the West. But notwithstanding this progress, it is still the day of small things. The churches among us, compared by a New England standard, are small and feeble. Their strength consists only in the interest felt in their prosperity and in the piety possessed by their members. But the most difficult step of all has been taken. A foothold has been gained. Thanks be to God, and under him, thanks to our brethren, faithful though few, who have contributed with no stinting hand of their substance and their exertions It no longer even in appearance depends on any other part of the world, whether Unitarianism shall *exist* in this region or not; yet let me say as earnestly, that so far as human means are concerned, it depends on our friends at the East whether or not our views shall spread widely and prevail. What has been done, shows that much more may be done. Ought any thing to be done? The question is best answered by looking at the immense field of usefulness and for the diffusion of our views, now opened, but which if not soon occupied, must in a great measure be soon closed to us. The waves of emigration are breaking over the whole length of the Alleghanies. Along our great rivers, by the side of unnamed streams, on the edge of the melancholy prairie, in the midst of every wilderness, towns, villages, cities are springing up as if in a night. A world is in the process of being peopled — its institutions formed — its future character and welfare determined. From the very nature of emigration, the individuals that make up the millions of these new States are alone — dislocated from their old social positions — rent away from the associations and restraints of childhood and youth, and mingled, a drop in an ocean, with those

from every clime under the sun. The situation has its great moral dangers. It has also its great moral advantages. The individual is to act out his own individuality — to be himself and not a mere fragment of a community. Freedom of thought is not awed down by hereditary opinions and usages. The country is not meted out and organized into cliques and sects and factions, to some one of which each person must belong on penalty of losing all place in the active world. There is, in general, a readiness to hear all opinions discussed — and a generous willingness to suppose that they may possibly be true, though they have not been transmitted to us from the dark ages of Europe. Society is yet in its elemental state. Glorious elements they are, and though in a chaotic state, ready to be shaped into a world. A few years will determine the character and tendencies of all the institutions most important in influencing public sentiment between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi. But soon society, now so susceptible of impression, will be fixed and hardened in settled forms and feelings, as in older regions. What is now as the wax, will soon be as the rock. Associations, tastes, habits, institutions, and that social and sectarian organization which turns each one into an inquisitor on every other man's opinions and doings, will make the West impenetrable to opinions which have not already taken root in its soil.

This is the time for action then. And all Christians have discovered this but the Unitarians. This valley is almost filled with the churches, colleges, theological schools and missionaries of the different orthodox sects. Their ablest men are setting their faces westward as the place of the greatest usefulness. May we not learn of them?

And how shall a knowledge of our views be spread? Either by books or the living voice; and almost solely by the latter. They will make no progress without living men to explain and enforce them. The question then comes; how are the means to be provided or the way prepared for sending preachers? There are four principal methods.

1. By contributing to the funds of the American Unitarian Association through the medium of auxiliaries. This is by far the best method. Being appropriated by those whose business it is to know the wants and condition of every part of the country, and those preachers also who are willing to engage in missionary labors, the money will be expended in a way to ensure more economy and to do more good, than if spent by those who are less acquainted with the real state of things.

The only objection there can be to this, is the horror that some have of the name "Unitarian Association," or of being themselves connected with it. It is difficult to see any sufficient reason for this sensitiveness. It is plain that he who is resolved always to act individually and alone, will do nothing. He may talk much, but he will do nothing. He annihilates his influence. In a word, when the bad are every where associating for mutual and general harm, shall the good man hesitate to unite with others to do good? Perhaps if he could make the world do as he wished, he might choose a different method;—but because he cannot do good in what he thinks the best way, will he not do it at all?

But associations do harm, it is said. They destroy all individuality of character. They annihilate the man and convert him into a mere wheel or spring in the great machine of a Society.

Suppose that this is all true;—what then? Whose fault is it? The man's own. Though he belongs to five hundred societies it is no reason why he should lose his moral independence. If I think it a good thing to distribute bibles, does it diminish my independence, if I join with a few of my neighbors who think with me, to distribute the Word of Life? Suppose we call ourselves a Bible Society, do I then cease to be a free agent? No: he who loses his moral independence by joining a society, may be sure that he had very little such independence to lose.

But they who make this objection, misconceive man's moral position. Do they think to avoid all associations? They cannot if they would. Before associations can be destroyed, you must abolish the social principle, for the former is the necessary product of the latter. The whole business of life is carried on by associations. All schools, from the infant to the professional, depend for existence on this principle. The associating principle builds every church — erects every hospital — sets in motion the myriad wheels of the manufactory — opens the warehouses and spreads the sails of every mart of commerce. It gives birth to law — it lends to the court of justice its lightning — and a free government is one of its noblest manifestations. Every step forward in the division of labor is the fruit of wider and closer association. Civilization depends on this principle. Could you do it away, the third generation would be barbarians. Indeed, one of the chief lessons to be learned in life, is how to be individuals — free agents — not *out* of society, but *in* society. Amidst these ten thousand associations in which we are all necessarily and willingly implicated and active, is the

"Unitarian Association" the only one which cripples moral freedom? Is it the only one to be avoided? The first association formed to spread the truths of the gospel, was that of the apostles of our Lord. Surely there are few who will not regard this as high authority.

2. The next method is for a church, or for several churches united, (as has been lately done,) to support a missionary. I like this method. It is a good thing for a man's soul, when he rises in the midst of the great congregation to pray, to remember that he and his brethren have not been unmindful of the spiritual wants of others. It is good for them when they pray for the spread of the truth, to feel that they have practically done something to promote its spread. It will give a new life to their devotions to feel that at that very time, a missionary whom they have provided, is carrying consolation to sorrowing hearts, and strength to wavering consciences.

3. Another method is for each society in its turn to send out its own clergyman for three or six months on missionary labor.

Were I permitted to address any society on this subject, I would say; — You have been benefited by the labors of your Pastor. In the church, in sickness, in sorrow, as a teacher, as a guide, you have felt, you have known from experience, that he was capable of doing good. For years past you have been, for years to come you expect to be, blest by his labors. Let others then, who have no religious teacher to whom they look with confidence, share with you for a short season in your advantages. You can supply his place for a few months and hardly feel it; and in those few months he may, under the blessing of Providence, have been able to build up

another christian society, where souls shall be saved, and from which, as a centre, truth shall spread. It may cost you some sacrifices, but believe me, such self-denials will not injure your hearts or enfeeble your devotions. You pray every sabbath that the gospel may have free course and be glorified throughout the world; — will not this be a good way to show that the prayers which you utter from the lips, rise up from the heart?

And were I permitted to speak as I have supposed, I would say, that you will gain more than you will lose by the improvement of your minister. It is not good for him to be always at home. Familiarity with one state of society and ignorance of any other, will make him insensible in some degree to the wants of his own people. It is well for him and for you that he should see men under different aspects. It is well that he should have a larger experience of human conditions and wants. All the books and all the solitary meditations in the world, will not give him so intimate a sense of the worth of christian truth and of the importance of the guidance, the sanctions and consolations of the gospel, as six months of missionary labor. More than years of study, it will teach him how and how truly Christ is a Saviour, and how he may become a more efficient minister of Christ. And while he learns this in doing good to others, you in turn will receive the full benefit of what he learns in his increased and more enlightened zeal in his sacred office.

4. There is yet one other method. Those who think it unwise to pledge themselves for any particular course, or dread becoming entangled with an association, may still contribute to what they at the present time consider a good object. They may make their clergyman a life

member of the American Unitarian Association; they may themselves contribute a certain sum annually; or if they do not like this, at least make an occasional donation, and still keep, for all practical purposes, disconnected from any thing which by the most sensitive could be called a sectarian organization.

And what a noble work is the one here proposed! Had we any just sense of what we are, of immortality, of God, the common interests of life would in the comparison fade into insignificance. For what is this work? Nothing less than the salvation — not of property or reputation — but of the soul itself — the welfare of that which cannot die. He is justly honored who of his abundance aids a young man when he is struggling with difficulties at the outset of life and puts him in the way of success. Is it not a still nobler work to aid souls upward to heaven? They do a noble work, and God will bless them for it, who build hospitals and asylums for the sick and blind in body. But think of man one moment as he is — an IMMORTAL and ACCOUNTABLE being; — is it not a still nobler work to build hospitals and eye infirmaries for souls. O! my friend, I fear that none of us appreciate the importance of the soul — the man. Occupied in business, sympathizing with others in their occupations, rejoicing in their success, pained by their failure, we forget that each human being has something to gain, and, dread thought! something to lose, for which the kingdoms of this world cannot compensate him — his SOUL! We are blinded by temporal interests. Go out in the clearest night and hold your hand over your eye and it will shut out half of the sky. So I fear, too

often the interests of time, so close and pressing upon us. hide the infinite interests of eternity.

I have spoken at perhaps, too great length, of a great work in which other sects have come forward, and to which our brethren, I hope, will cheerfully give their aid. That work is, to bring the sinful, the doubting, the indifferent to Christ. What multitudes there are in our land who know nothing of him except in name. To their hearts Christ has not come — has not taught — has not died. They who carry christian truth to them, carry Christ to them. To them, it will be as if the Saviour were raised from the dead, and taught, and wrought his miracles before them.

And every one may aid in this holy work, each in his own way, one by writing, another by the contribution of money, another by the preaching of the word. The division of labor that exists in modern times, renders it necessary that all should join in such a work. And all can join. By the contribution of means, the mechanic at his bench, the farmer in his field, the merchant in his counting room, becomes, not less than the preacher, a missionary of the gospel. Let all join, and ages to come, with grateful hearts, will utter thanks for the labors of this generation.

But I must come to a close. I have written sheets, where, when I began, I did not intend to write pages. And it were easier now to go on, than to pause, in speaking of as holy and noble a cause as often engages the interest of human hearts.

I say, a holy and a noble cause. Many a cause has been dignified with this name, and thousands of lives sacrificed to it on the battle field, and thousands of widows

and orphans made, when the only interests involved have been a few leagues of land on a desert coast, a few vessels wrongfully seized, a slight tax unjustly levied. But in this cause of which I speak, not his temporal interests, but the welfare of the man himself, the welfare of the soul, is involved. I speak not of what the soul may love, but of the soul itself — not of temporal interests, but of eternity. I see before me a vast empire growing up — rapidly — in a night — composed in great part of the young, composed almost altogether of those whose object it is to seek their fortunes. I see them sometimes neglectful of their religious wants — sometimes heedless of them, sometimes struggling against almost insurmountable difficulties to supply them. I see multitudes of the young from our own New England environed by perils of which they are scarcely conscious. Is it strange that I look to their mothers, their fathers, their kindred in New England for aid in shielding them from danger? It may be as irksome to us as to any one to solicit the benevolent action of others, but I see around me spiritual wants that cry aloud, as if the spirit of God were speaking in the midst. I remember that soon you and I and all now on the earth will have passed into a state of being in which our temporal interests will be nothing, in which the soul will be all in all, in which a contribution or an effort made to save a single soul will be more grateful to us than the memory that we have possessed the honor or wealth of the world. I remember that in that future world we shall meet again, in the presence of God and of souls saved or lost through our care or neglect, and I do not hesitate to call on our brethren for aid. May they read in the spirit of christian charity and thoughtfulness.

as I am sure you will, what has been here written, and as each one judges, so let him act.

Your friend and brother,

Cincinnati. E. PEABODY.

1st Series. No. 121.

"TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY."

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

DEFERENCE PAID TO THE SCRIPTURES

BY

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By JAMES WALKER.

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DISCOURSE.

The distinction between the Deist and the Christian is this: the Deist takes the facts of natural religion and reasons on them as established truths; the Christian adds to these the facts of revelation, and reasons on them all as established truths. The Deist does not cease to be a Deist, merely because he reasons erroneously, and comes to false conclusions, from the facts of natural religion, as he understands them; neither does the Christian cease to be a Christian, merely because he reasons erroneously, and comes to false conclusions, from the facts of revelation, as he understands them. A man is not a Christian because he believes in this or that interpretation of Christ's doctrine; but because he believes in Christ himself, and of course in that interpretation of his doctrine, which he regards as the true one, and as the one intended.

The facts of revelation, in which I include its peculiar and express doctrines, are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, which are our authority on the subject; and this authority, on all questions arising among Christians, is

decisive and final. The Bible is the only record, and a faithful, true, and infallible record of the essential facts and doctrines of revelation. Accordingly we may say of believers, of every denomination, "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The error has been industriously propagated, that Liberal Christians, or Unitarians, do not pay a proper respect and submission to the obvious teachings of the Word of God. I do not propose to comment on the mistakes, or the disingenuousness, in which such an imputation must have originated; much less to retaliate the wrong, even though I might think that this could be done, in some cases, with considerable show of reason and justice. I have charity to believe, that every sect, certainly that every Protestant sect, as a body, mean to derive, and think that they really do derive their peculiar opinions and practices from a just and fair interpretation of the sacred volume. Still, there are considerations, some of which it will be my present object to bring a little more distinctly into notice, which demonstrate, as it seems to me, that the conduct of Unitarians is the most enlightened and consistent, in this respect, and most in accordance with a proper respect for, and a strict fidelity to, both the spirit and the letter of the written Word.

1. In the first place, they are among the very few Christian sects, who, in practice as well as in theory, recognise and respect, as the fundamental principles of Protestantism, the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the right of private judgment in the interpretation of Scripture.

In most places it is not enough that a man professes to

believe in the Scriptures as he understands them, and gives evidence, in his general conduct, of the sincerity of his profession. He must not only believe in the Scriptures themselves, but also in some human exposition of the Scriptures, or be shut out from Christian privileges and Christian rights. The whole business of creed making and creed imposing is at war, as it seems to me, not only with Christian liberty and Protestant consistency, but with a proper sense of the entire and sole supremacy of God's Word in the church. I know it is sometimes said, that the creed is formed and imposed in the belief that it conveys the true sense of Scripture, and is, therefore, held on the authority of Scripture and on that alone, so that, after all, it is the Bible, and the Bible only. But this is evading the objection, not answering it; for the objection is not, that a man should express his present convictions of the true import of Scripture in the form of a creed, but that he should attempt to impose it on others, or on his future self, as a test of the Christian character, or as a condition of Christian rights and privileges. Sooner than be a Protestant, and take my Bible with the interpretation put upon it by a dead creed, I would be a Catholic, and take my Bible with the interpretation put upon it by a living church; for the last is capable, at least, of availing itself of the new lights that offer, and thus accommodating itself to the progress of the human mind. It is not enough considered, that to take the *sense* of Scripture on human authority, and at human dictation, is to take our religion itself on human authority, and at human dictation.

2. I may add that the Christians have evinced a stronger desire than Unitarians, to restore the text of

Scripture to its original state, and put into the hands of the people generally correct and approved translations of Scripture.

On this subject there is a strange want of discrimination in the public mind, and a strange apathy. It is known every where — it has been published from one end of christendom to the other — it is admitted alike by Trinitarians and Unitarians, that before the invention of printing, and while the Scriptures were circulated and transmitted in manuscript alone, several interpolations and corruptions found their way into the sacred volume through the negligence or the fraud of transcribers. Now it happens, that some of these interpolations and corruptions have evidently been introduced to favor the Trinity, and three passages especially* which used to be reckoned among the strongest of what were called Trinitarian proof texts, have been ascertained by Trinitarians themselves, to be of this character. These, of course, Unitarians reject as being of no authority in the discussion; and for doing so, incredible as it may seem, pains have been taken to create against them a popular prejudice, as if they were guilty of corrupting Scripture; — a crime properly chargeable not upon them, but upon those only who originally introduced or altered the passages in question, or who now seek to perpetuate the imposture.

With respect also to the common English version of the Bible, Unitarians are as much impressed as others, by the general simplicity and sublimity of the language, and fully appreciate the moral advantages to be derived from early religious associations with it. But they cannot for-

*Acts xx, 28; 1 Timothy iii, 16; 1 John v, 7.

get — reverence for God's word will not permit them to forget, that it is a translation, and not the original; and that the translation was made by men of moderate literary attainments and opportunities, and by sectarians who were as liable as others to be biassed and corrupted in their literary judgments by their sectarian prejudices. It is not meant that common Christians need fear being misled by the version, imperfect as it unquestionably is, so long as they are willing to be guided by the general tenor of Scripture; but this cannot be said of those who put great stress on single words, or single phrases, as given by our translators in disputed passages.* The minister who takes advantage of the ignorance of his people in this respect, incurs the tremendous responsibility of "handling the word of God deceitfully." Unitarians are for the Bible, and the Bible only — the Bible as it came from the hands of "holy men of God, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

3. Again, Unitarians evince their reverence for Scripture by adhering as closely as possible, in the inculcation of essential and fundamental doctrines, to the words of Scripture.

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is ONE Lord."† Jesus, again, in solemn prayer to the FATHER says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know THEE, *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom THOU hast sent."‡ Paul also contends, "For though there be

* Among the passages frequently appealed to in the Trinitarian controversy, the common translation of which must not be trusted, we may mention the following: Acts vii, 59; xi, 14. 21; Romans ix, 5; 1 Corinthians i, 2; Philippians ii, 5. 8; John iii, 16.

† Mark xii, 29. ‡ John xvii, 3.

that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many and lords many,) but to us there is but *one God*, THE FATHER."* Unitarians, therefore, can say, what Trinitarians cannot, not only that their doctrine is taught in Scripture, but that it is taught there in so many words. The honest Trinitarian believes, doubtless, that his peculiar doctrines are taught in Scripture, at least by implication or construction; but he cannot believe that they are taught there expressly, and in so many words.

He may insist on "a trinity in unity," or that God exists in "three persons," "three distinctions," or "three somewhats;" he may talk about the "triune God," "God-man," "God the Son" and "God the Holy Ghost," "very God of very God;" and he may think to obviate all objections to such language by refined and wire drawn reasonings about "essences," "subsistences" and "hypostases," "priorities in co-equalities," and "pluralities in unities." As if for the purpose of illustration he may say, with Cheynel in his work on the "Divine Triunity," "We may best resemble all that difference which is between the essence of God, and the divine subsistences, by considering the transcendent affections of *ens simpliciter*, and the attributes of God; who doth infinitely transcend not only a prædicamental substance, but a metaphysical entity; as the most metaphysical men, who are sound in the faith, do honestly confess." Now I do not deny that Trinitarians may mistake all this for sense, and for the sense of Scripture: but they certainly cannot mistake it for the *words* of Scripture. It is the jargon of the schools; "the words which man's wisdom teacheth," and not those

* Corinthians viii, 5, 6.

"which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Luther appears to have felt the force of this objection, when he said, "The word *trinity* sounds oddly, and is a human invention; it were better to call Almighty God, God, than Trinity." Calvin also says, "I like not this prayer, O holy and blessed Trinity; it savours of barbarity. The word *trinity*," he continues, "is barbarous, insipid, profane; a human invention, grounded on no testimony of God's word; the popish God, unknown to the prophets and apostles."

It is right and important, that this should be stated clearly, and insisted on again and again. There are many terms and phrases current in the community on religious subjects, which have become sacred in men's eyes, and are used continually as if they were to be found in Scripture, though they are not. Repeatedly has it fallen under my own observation that persons have thought themselves to be quoting the Bible in support of the Trinity, when they were in fact quoting their catechism or their creed.

4. Unitarians manifest their preference for Scripture still further, by not attempting to evade or explain away those passages, which positively, and in so many words, assert Christ's inferiority to the Father.

"If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father; FOR MY FATHER IS GREATER THAN I."* "But of that day, and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither THE SON, but THE FATHER."† "I can *of mine own self* DO NOTHING," said our Saviour in another place; "as I hear I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own

* John xiv, 28. † Mark xiii, 32.

will, but the will of THE FATHER which hath sent me."* "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom TO GOD, EVEN THE FATHER." "Then shall *the Son also himself be subject* unto him who put all things under him, that GOD may be all in all."† These passages, it is plain, assert explicitly, unequivocally, and in so many words, Christ's inferiority to the Father. To evade them or explain them away, or reconcile them in any manner with the doctrine of the Trinity, it is not enough that we take one possible but doubtful meaning of here and there an obscure passage, and change it for another possible but doubtful meaning. We must take the clear meaning of clear passages, and the only meaning which they seem capable of bearing, and contradict or overrule it by maintaining exactly the contrary. Though our Lord said that his Father was greater than he, we must believe that he was as great as his Father; though he said, that the Son knew not "of that day, and that hour," we must believe that the Son did know "of that day, and that hour;" though he said, "of mine own self I can do nothing," we must believe that of his own self he could do every thing; though his dominion is affirmed to be a delegated and temporary dominion, a kingdom which he is to deliver up to God even the Father, and be himself subject, we must believe that he is, and always has been, and always must be the same being with the Father, and equal to him in power and glory.

5. God forbid that any one should be hindered in his liberty to do this, if he sees fit, and if he thinks it necessary to truth and duty. I have charity to believe that humble and devout Trinitarians imagine that there is

* John v, 30. † 1 Corinthians xv, 24. 28.

some way or other, in which the passages in question can be reconciled with their peculiar tenets. The only way of reconciling them as yet proposed, is by the hypothesis of "two natures" in Christ; — the hypothesis, I say, for it is not pretended that there is a shadow of express authority in Scripture for this very extraordinary assumption. It is an hypothesis, a mere hypothesis, an invention of man's wisdom, and on this account, considering the important purposes it is made to serve, should be regarded with extreme jealousy by those who wish to be guided by the Bible and the Bible only. The best that can be said of it is, that learned and ingenious men have pronounced it to be a principle or key of interpretation, which it is necessary to assume and apply in order to reconcile Scripture with Scripture.

We deny, however, that it is necessary to assume the hypothesis of Christ's double nature in order to reconcile Scripture with Scripture. Unitarians find no difficulty in reconciling Scripture with Scripture, without the aid of this hypothesis. The difficulty felt, does not consist in reconciling the obvious and prominent sense of the passages in question with the rest of Scripture, but in reconciling it with Trinitarian interpretations of Scripture. Besides, this boasted principle or key of interpretation fails for another reason. Though the hypothesis which we are considering supposes Christ to have had two natures, it does not suppose him to have had two distinct minds. His mind was one, and this one mind could not, at the same time, have been informed and uninformed on the same subject; the same idea could not, at the same moment, have been present to it, and absent from it. When, therefore, he positively, without qualification, and

in so many words, disclaimed all knowledge "of that day, and that hour," the question is not whether he knew it by his human nature, or by his divine nature, but whether he knew it by his one mind; or, in other words, whether he knew it at all. If he did, it is fatal to his veracity; if he did not, it is fatal to the Trinitarian key.

"Christ," says Dr. Lightfoot, "as the second person of the Trinity, knew the day, and to say otherwise is blasphemous; but to say that the Messiah knew it not, who nevertheless was the same with the second person of the Trinity, is not blasphemous." "If a Deist were to argue in this manner," says Henry Taylor, "should we not call it shuffling? Can George III know a thing as king of England, and be ignorant of it as elector of Hanover, till it is revealed to him by the king, who is the same elector of Hanover to whom he reveals it? Is not this revealing it to himself, who knew it before; and is not this mere sophistry?" Surely it is not for persons who do not hesitate to resort to such expedients to reconcile the Bible with their preconceived opinions, to turn round and accuse their brethren of wresting Scripture.

6. The Trinity, as we have seen, is not sustained by the express teachings of Scripture. Pending the question, however, whether the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in Scripture, there is the strongest antecedent probability that we shall find it taught directly and expressly, or not at all.

The Jews, in the time of our Saviour, held, as every one knows, to the strict and personal unity of God, as the fundamental principle of their faith and worship. Now, if the sacred writers regarded this as an error, as a radical and fatal error, it is not conceivable that they should

not have said so, at least once, and in so many words. It is not conceivable that, under such circumstances, they should have contented themselves with merely inculcating doctrines that implied it. Besides, the Trinity, say its advocates, is a mystery; by which they mean an unintelligible or inexplicable proposition. Now, it is not on this account, merely, that Unitarians reject it; for though an unintelligible or inexplicable proposition, if they found it in Scripture, and in the very words of Scripture, they would let it stand in the creed. Even in such a case they could not, properly speaking, be said to believe the proposition itself; for, not knowing what was asserted in the proposition, they could not, of course, know whether they believed it or not; still, they would let the words stand. They do not perceive, however, how an unintelligible or inexplicable proposition can be held as a doctrine of inference or construction merely. When a man advances a doctrine or opinion as matter of inference or construction, he takes what he conceives to be the sense of the premises, and expresses that sense in his own words. Obviously, therefore, he must know the sense. How can a man say that a proposition, the sense of which he does not profess to know, is contained or implied in another proposition, or in any number of other propositions? At any rate, it is not enough that a few passages may be adduced from the sacred writings, which will bear a Trinitarian exposition as well as a Unitarian exposition. In all such cases, reverence and respect for the Bible, not only allow, but require us to prefer the latter interpretation, as being more in accordance with its express teachings in other places, and the general tenor of revelation, as well

as with the doctrines of natural religion, and the dictates of right reason.

7. Waving this, however, let the argument proceed on the supposition, that the doctrine of the Trinity is one which might have been taught by inference or construction alone, and that it was as likely to have been taught in this way as any other doctrine. It is certain that so far as any inferences can be drawn from the narrative of our Lord's life, as given by the evangelists, they are entirely on the side of Unitarianism, and against the Trinity

Go back to the childhood of Jesus, when, as we are told, he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."* Could this have been said of him "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning!" If Jesus Christ was God in his nature, he must have been God from the beginning, and therefore omniscient from the beginning, and could not of course, have "increased in wisdom." "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."† This remarkable incident in our Saviour's life has been variously interpreted; but all agree that he was really tempted; not as God is, but "in all points like as we are."‡ Did the three evangelists, who record this event, imagine themselves speaking of that Being, of whom it is said, in another place, that he "cannot be tempted with evil."|| Frequent mention is made in the four gospels, of our Lord's devotional habits; and it is intimated that he sometimes went apart, and spent whole nights in prayer. Does not the very act of prayer imply dependence and subordination? And in this case, it will not do to say it was his human nature which prayed; for it is not a

* Luke ii, 52. † Matthew iv, 1. ‡ Hebrews iv, 15. || James i, 13

person's *nature* which prays but the *person himself;* so that, assuming that Christ was God, whenever Christ prayed God prayed. Follow him to the garden of Gethsemane, and hear him cry out in an agony, "O, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."* "*If* it be possible," — "not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt;" — was this language, which, without guarding it at all, the sacred writers would have been likely to have put into the mouth of one whom they did not regard as a distinct being from the Father, dependent on him, and submissive to him? "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."† Strengthening whom? Does the evangelist speak as if he thought it was an angel strengthening the Almighty, or an incarnation of the Almighty? An account is given of our Lord's crucifixion, and he is afterwards spoken of as dead and buried. In the Confession of Faith used by the Reformed Dutch Church in this country, we are told, that "in the mean time the divine nature always remained united with the human, even when he laid in the grave, and the godhead did not cease to be in him, any more than it did when he was an infant." This, doubtless, a Trinitarian must believe; but would an unprejudiced person infer it from the evangelical narrative, either from what is expressly asserted, or from any, the most hidden, allusion or implication? I pray you to read this narrative again, and then to ask yourselves, whether the sacred historians appear to have written as if their minds were filled and overwhelmed with the thought, as admitting the fact they must have been, that the "GODHEAD" lay entombed for three days in the sepulchre of Jesus.

* Matthew xxvi, 39. † Luke xxii, 43.

And here let me remind you that the hypothesis of "two natures" in Christ for peculiar reasons, does not meet or satisfy the conditions of the case, and will not help, in any way, to obviate the particular difficulty now under consideration. Let it be that he had two natures, human nature, and divine nature, corresponding to the two natures in man, animal and rational: still it is agreed on all sides that he was but one *person*. His two natures constituted but one person: — one to think, to act, to enjoy, to suffer. A man, it is true, may suffer in his animal nature, what he does not suffer in his rational nature, and in his rational nature, what he does not suffer in his animal nature; but it is not true, in either case, correctly speaking, that his animal nature suffers, or that his rational nature suffers: it is the *man himself* that suffers. The ME of Jesus, to borrow a significant term which has lately come into use to express personality, that which thought, acted, enjoyed, suffered and died — the ME of Jesus was one; and this one ME, if we believe in the Trinity, we must believe was God.

8. There is another view of the evangelical history, from which the inferences are also plainly and decisively in favor of Unitarianism, and against the Trinity. I refer now to what may be gathered from the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, respecting the impressions made and left on the minds of our Lord's cotemporaries and immediate disciples, by his actual presence, and the facts recorded of him.

From the miraculous circumstances which preceded, attended, and immediately followed his birth, they were authorized to regard him, and some of them did regard him, as the Son of God, the Messiah, the Consolation of

Israel. Afterwards multitudes were impressed with the same conviction, and strengthened and confirmed in it, by the "miracles, and wonders, and signs which God did *by* him." They saw, they were persuaded, they felt, that he was one "whom the FATHER had sanctified and sent into the world," to be "the way, the truth, and the life;" but nothing more. The words of the officers, sent out by the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus, "Never man spake like this man;"* the shoutings of the populace at his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, "Hozanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hozanna in the highest;"† the conduct of the armed band into whose hands our Lord was betrayed, when, "as soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground;"‡ the exclamation of the Roman centurion at the crucifixion, "Truly this was the Son of God;"§ all indicate a belief, or at least a vague suspicion, an exciting and startling apprehension of his divine character and mission; but of nothing more. The belief that he was the Messiah of whom their prophets had spoken, even a vague suspicion of this, was sufficient to throw around him, not only in the eyes of his immediate followers, but of the people generally, an air of mystery, and cause him to be regarded with feelings of peculiar reverence and awe.

But who will say that he was approached or addressed by his disciples or friends, while on earth, as one who really was, or who claimed to be the Infinite God? Peter, on one occasion, "took him and began to rebuke him,"‖

* John vii, 46. † Matthew xxi, 9. ‡ John xviii, 6. § Matthew xxvii, 54. ‖ Matthew xvi, 22.

could he have believed, could he have had the remotest suspicion or apprehension that he was rebuking the God of heaven and earth? Follow him into his most private friendships and intimacies, — with the family of Lazarus, for example; was he received there, do you suppose, not as a teacher come from God, but as God himself? In two instances, it would seem, that the Jews, his enemies, bent on perverting every word that fell from his lips, accused him of making himself God, or equal with God.* Need I remind you how promptly and effectually this charge was repelled, in the first place, on the ground that, even if he had called himself God, their inference would not follow, as that name, in their sacred books, was given not only to God himself, but to those also "unto whom the word of God came." Besides, he had not called himself God; he had only called himself the Son of God — a name which, in itself considered, instead of implying supreme divinity, suggested the idea of dependence and subordination. Not satisfied with this, he renews in this connexion the declaration so often made by him, that the Son could "do nothing of himself," but that all his wisdom, and power, and authority were "given" him by the Father. Now, let me ask whether it is for Christians to adopt the construction put upon the claims of Jesus, not by his friends, but by his enemies — a construction, too, which Jesus himself took every opportunity, as we have seen, formally and publicly to confute and disavow.

9. Again; inferences may be drawn to the same effect from the total silence respecting the Trinity observed by the apostles, in their preaching as recorded in the Acts.

* John v, 18, and x, 33.

I am the more disposed to insist on this argument, because it is not liable, in any form or degree, to the objection sometimes urged against the preceding. Our Saviour, it has been said, was restrained by feelings of modesty or delicacy from making known his own supreme divinity, while living on terms of such intimacy and familiarity with his disciples, and personal friends; or he may have been deterred by other considerations from an early and premature disclosure of the doctrine. Even on this supposition, however, it is impossible to account for the fact, that the evangelists, writing more than thirty years after the crucifixion, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost, did not notice and correct the erroneous impressions at first entertained in regard to Christ's nature, as we know they did those in regard to his resurrection. Besides, if we suppose that the doctrine of the Trinity was not taught with the other Christian doctrines, but by itself and after the crucifixion, how can we account for the fact that no record is given of the time when the stupendous truth flashed, for the first time, on the understandings of the apostles, and that it cannot be determined, or even conjectured, by any observable change in their language or conduct? But, be that as it may, it will not be disputed, that the apostles and first Christian missionaries, when they went forth to preach the Gospel to all nations, must have been acquainted with the doctrine of the Trinity, if well founded, and must have insisted on it frequently and earnestly, if they regarded it as an essential article of the Christian faith. Therefore, supposing the doctrine in question to be well founded and all important, we know what must have happened, and we have the means of determining with sufficient certainty and

precision whether it did happen. We open our Bibles, and turn to the discourses of the apostles which have come down to us, and find that in none of them is the Trinity asserted, or mentioned, or expressly alluded to, or necessarily implied in any manner whatsoever.

Begin with Peter's discourse, immediately after the effusion of the Spirit at the feast of Pentecost, the object of which was to inculcate on his countrymen just views of Jesus Christ. Then pass to the discourse delivered by the same apostle before Cornelius and his friends, in which it was his purpose to present the Gospel for the first time, to a new order of converts, and call their attention to its leading and distinguishing principles. Read next, and attentively, the discourses of Paul, sometimes delivered before the Jews, sometimes before superstitious idolaters, and sometimes before refined and subtle free-thinkers: in all of which the burden of his doctrine is "Jesus and the resurrection;"—all however, as silent as the grave on the subject of the Trinity. At no time, on no occasion, under no circumstances, do the apostles inculcate this doctrine in their preaching, either expressly and in so many words, or by implication, or allusion. They go up and down the whole civilized world, preaching the gospel to every creature, without, however, dropping a word or syllable, which by any fair, we had almost said, by any possible construction can be made to teach, or necessarily to imply a doctrine, now generally regarded as the corner stone of the system.

It is not necessary to suppose that the apostles have given, in those of their discourses which have come down to us, a full and connected summary of "the truth as it is in Jesus." Still it is not conceivable that they should

have entirely omitted, on such occasions, all notice of parts of the system which they considered essential to its vitality, and a belief of which they regarded as necessary to salvation. Look at the conduct of Trinitarian missionaries at the present day. Do they think it right—with their views and convictions would it be right, never to mention in their preaching, the doctrine in question, nor the kindred doctrines which are built upon it, and obviously presuppose or imply it? How then can we explain or justify the total silence of the apostles on this subject, not on one occasion merely, but as far as we have the means of judging, on every occasion, except on the supposition that what they did not preach, they did not believe? It seems to me, I confess, that this inference ought to go as far as any mere inference can go, towards settling the controversy.

10. Another argument, to my mind peculiarly conclusive and satisfactory, is suggested by the forms of prayer given in Scripture, and the current language of Scripture respecting the only proper object of prayer.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him ONLY shalt thou serve."* "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him."† "And in that day" said Jesus "*ye shall ask* ME *nothing*. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the FATHER in my name, HE will give it you."‡ What can be clearer, more unequivocal, or I may add, more imperative than the doctrine here taught: namely, that the object of religious worship, properly so called, is one; that the Father is the only

* Matthew iv, 10. † John iv, 23. ‡ John xvi, 23.

proper object of this worship; and that the Son is not a proper object of it? This doctrine, moreover, our Lord took care to illustrate and enforce, not only by his own example, but by the forms of ascription which he prescribed expressly for the use of his disciples. "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, OUR FATHER which art in heaven."* Will any one persist in asserting, in the face of such passages, that Unitarians in worshipping the Father, and him only, do not worship the Christian's God? I am not disposed to recriminate, but if I were, it certainly would not be difficult to show that this imputation might be thrown back, with much more appearance of reason and justice, on those who begin their prayers with "O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity," or who in any manner bring up before their imaginations three objects of supreme religious homage. Let me not be understood to say, or to imply, that Trinitarians are inconsistent in their worship. If Jesus Christ were God, and if the Holy Ghost were God, co-equal with the Father, it would seem to follow, I confess, that it must be wrong to address our prayers to the Father exclusively, as the Scriptures peremptorily direct and require. The inference is, that the sacred writers did not believe, and did not mean to inculcate the co-equality here assumed, and on which the worship in question is founded.

Let me also advert, in this connexion, to the doxologies in common use. The Scriptures abound in simple and touching expressions of this character, ascribing glory and "giving thanks always for all things, unto God even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."† Of these Unitarians avail themselves freely and indiscriminately; not only because the language itself is consecrat-

* Luke xi, 2. † Ephesians v, 20.

ed in their affections and associations, but because no other could be found which would express so well, and so exactly, what they think and mean. Every doxology in Scripture is a Unitarian doxology. Accordingly, when men wanted, and were determined to have a Trinitarian doxology, they were obliged to make it for themselves. Every formal Trinitarian doxology in common use is of human composition, strangely, and I must say, irreverently and presumptuously substituted for those given us in the Word of God.

11. But there are texts we shall be told, single texts, which seem, at first sight, to say the least, to favor the popular views on this subject.

Every ancient writing contains expressions which, when separated from their connexion, and interpreted according to our present modes of thinking and speaking, seem at first sight to inculcate doctrines directly at variance with its obvious teachings in other places, as well as with acknowledged first principles. It is not generally speaking, that the discrepancies here referred to are real, but only apparent discrepancies which vanish as soon as by careful study we are prepared to enter fully into the spirit of the original, and apprehend the sense really intended. Of this description are the much vaunted Trinitarian proof-texts, so called. They are among the "things hard to be understood," occurring occasionally in other parts of Scripture, but chiefly in the obscurer portions of John and Paul, and peculiarly liable to be wrested by "the unlearned and unstable." The kind of wresting, against which we are here forewarned, may be inferred from this, that one of the principal causes to which it is ascribed is a want of learning. It consists in preferring the first impression made on an uninformed

mind by the passages in question, confessedly encompassed with difficulty, to the interpretation which approves itself, after much thought and carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, to the thoroughly instructed scholar.

We may observe, generally, that these texts are exceedingly few, and much fewer than, from the effect of confident and frequent repetition, is commonly supposed. One of the most accomplished and serious of the female writers of the present day, who has searched the Scriptures with a view to ascertain what they really teach on this interesting and important subject, and who came to the investigation as a member of the Church of England, and of course with no sectarian prejudices to warp her judgment in favor of Unitarianism, reduces the number of texts which seem at first sight to inculcate the proper deity of Christ to two.* I know that the common answer to this objection is, that if the Trinity is really

* A View of the General Tenor of the New Testament regarding the Nature of Jesus Christ. By Joanna Baillie. The two passages referred to above are the proem of John, which has been shown, again and again, to be reconcilable with Unitarianism, and even to inculcate it: and the passage in Philippians ii. 6, 8, which has not only been shown, when properly translated, to inculcate Unitarianism, but has been given up by some of the ablest and most learned Trinitarians as not relating to the proper deity of Christ. It is proper to add that the author of the work just mentioned, in the course of her investigations, was led by the irresistible force of the Scriptural evidence to discard the doctrine of the Trinity, in which she had been educated. No instance has come to my knowledge of an intelligent Trinitarian, not bound to his creed by the conscious or unconscious influences of strong personal interests, who has sat down, as she did, and gone through the whole New Testament with a single view to ascertain for himself what it teaches respecting Christ's nature, without having his previous convictions shaken, if not reversed.

taught in Scripture, it matters not whether in one text, or in a thousand texts. Be it so; nevertheless, while the question is still at issue whether the doctrine is taught in Scripture, it must certainly operate as a strong presumption against it, that its ablest advocates are compelled to rest its defence on a very few passages, and these, too, passages confessedly obscure, and difficult of interpretation on any principle, and differently construed even by Trinitarians themselves. It is not a little remarkable that every text adduced in proof of the Trinity, with the single exception of the introduction to John's Gospel, has been given up by some learned and zealous Trinitarian writer, as making no part of the proper argument. And what, as it has been well and pointedly asked, must be thought of the strength of a chain of reasoning, every link of which, with but a single exception, has been pronounced unsound by some one or other of its ablest and most zealous defenders?

Unitarians do not deny that there are difficult passages in Scripture, as in every other book of like antiquity; nor that some of these passages might be shown to accord with the doctrine of a Triune God, provided this doctrine could be established from other and independent sources; as is the case also, perhaps still more remarkably, with the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation. It is enough that they have demonstrated, again and again, that all these passages are capable, and on fair and generally received principles of criticism, of a Unitarian interpretation. The assertion, or insinuation, from whatever quarter it may come, that Unitarians, as a body, are in the habit of questioning the genuineness of any passage of Scripture merely because it may be turned against them, or that they try

knowingly to wrest the meaning of such passages from what they believe to be their intended import, or that they do not hesitate to overrule and contradict acknowledged and essential doctrines of revelation on the authority of reason alone, is to be classed with those groundless and calumnious misrepresentations, to which religious zealots, though good men in other respects, have been so willing, in all ages, to lend themselves. If in a few instances Unitarian interpretations sound to the modern ear as less easy and natural, it almost always happens, I believe, not because they are really less easy and natural, even with our present modes of thought and expression, but simply and solely because they are less familiar, and differ widely, perhaps, from those to which we have been accustomed. To show how little Unitarians are embarrassed by Trinitarian proof-texts, as they are called, it is enough to observe that one of our ablest writers has taken these texts, and these texts alone, and on their evidence or testimony, apart from that of the rest of Scripture, has refuted the very doctrine which they are commonly, though vainly, adduced to support. At any rate, a plain and sensible man, who esteems it not only a right but a duty to think for himself in matters of faith and conscience, and has access to no better authority than the common version of the Bible in the formation of his religious opinions, will feel that his only safe guide must be to follow the obvious import of the general tenor of Scripture, and its plain passages. If he is a man of reflection and independence, he will be exceedingly slow to allow himself to be turned aside from this course by the conflicting expositions put on here and there an obscure and difficult text, on the respective merits of which he is not prepared

to decide, except at the dictation of his church or his priest.

12. Do Unitarians deny, then, it may be asked, that the sacred writings ascribe divine powers, divine offices, and divine authority to Jesus Christ?

By no means. The question is not whether divine powers, divine offices, and divine authority belong to Jesus Christ, but whether they belong to him as the Infinite and Eternal God. Did he bear his faculties as being "of himself," or did he hold them and exercise them in dependence on another, and a superior Being? It is not essential to Unitarianism to deny our Lord's divinity, but only his supreme, or underived and self-existent divinity. "To the law," then, "and to the testimony."

Our Lord says expressly, "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, IS NOT MINE TO GIVE; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my FATHER."* "As the father hath life in himself; so *hath he given* to the Son to have life in himself, and *hath given him* authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man."† Again; "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not *mine*, but his that sent me."‡ "For I have not spoken of MYSELF; but the FATHER which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak."§ "I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and TO MY GOD AND YOUR GOD."|| "Wherefore GOD also *hath highly exalted him* and *given* him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and

* Matthew xx, 23. † John v, 26, 27. ‡ Ib. vii, 16. § Ib. xii, 49.
|| Ib. xx, 17.

that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of GOD THE FATHER."* In contradiction, in apparently direct contradiction to passages like these, which I might go on to cite almost without end will any one say that Jesus Christ acted in his divine capacities "of himself;" and not in dependence on another and a superior? That he was clothed with divine endowments, and thus constituted, in some sense, though in a qualified and limited sense, a divine personage, and the object of religious faith and trust, is admitted as well by Unitarians as Trinitarians. But who that would pay the smallest deference to the plain and obvious teachings of Scripture, will maintain, or hold a doctrine which implies, that the power and authority belonging to the Son were not "given" him: that he was not what he was, and is not what he is, solely and exclusively by derivation and communication from the FATHER ALMIGHTY?

What then becomes of the argument, so common in this controversy, that certain passages of scripture ascribe divine powers and prerogatives to Jesus Christ, and certain other passages ascribe to him merely human powers and prerogatives; and that, therefore, he must be divine-human, or God-man in his *nature?* Admitting the premises as here stated, the conclusion does not follow except on the presumption, that the divine powers and prerogatives in question are by necessity incommunicable. If these powers and prerogatives can be delegated, and some of them, at least, we know have been to Moses and the prophets, to the apostles and first Christians, then the fact that our Lord possessed and exerted them, in itself considered, does not prove his supreme divinity. The fallacy which lurks under the argument I am now exposing, consists in this,

* Philippians ii, 9, 10, 11.

that while it purports to be an inference from Scripture, it is in truth an inference from philosophy, setting aside the positive declarations of Scripture. Our Saviour has said, again and again, and with almost every possible variety of expression and emphasis, that all the power and authority, in heaven and in earth, with which he was clothed, was "*given*" him; was a *delegated* power and authority; a power and authority which he did not possess by virtue of his own nature, but by virtue of divine communications. The question comes up, therefore, whether we are at liberty to set aside his express and positive testimony, and merely on the strength of men's reasonings, conclude that our Lord's powers and prerogatives were such, that God could not have communicated them, could not have delegated them, to whom he would. So far as the argument under consideration is really founded on Scripture, Unitarians can and do go along with it; they believe, fully, implicitly, devoutly, that Jesus Christ was clothed, as well with divine, as with human powers and prerogatives. They believe that God, even the Father, the Infinite One, poured out his Spirit without measure on his holy child Jesus, and by this "*made*" him to be "both Lord and Christ."* It is said and they believe that he was the Son of God, our Redeemer and Saviour, the chief corner stone. So far, I repeat it, as the argument is really founded on Scripture, Unitarians can and do go along with it; but they cannot be persuaded —they do not feel at liberty, to go beyond Scripture, much less against Scripture. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

* Acts ii, 36.

The views here presented are calculated, I am sure, to recommend the Scriptures to the attention and respect of enlightened men. They have suffered incalculably from being supposed to involve and make common cause with prejudices which the human mind has outgrown. The hour is coming, and now is, when the practical and reflecting part of the community will have a rational religion, or none. Many minds, and their number is increasing every day, are more affected by the internal evidences of Christianity, than by the external. These can hardly be won over to the Bible, so long as they are told and believe, that it builds every thing on a doctrine, of which Dr. South, one of its friends, has said, with perfect truth, "Were it not to be adored as a MYSTERY it would be exploded as a CONTRADICTION." It is said, I know, to reconcile men to the mystery of the Trinity, that every thing is a mystery — that every blade of grass which grows is a mystery, because we cannot tell *how* it grows. I hardly need add, that these are obviously not parallel cases. There is no dispute about the *fact* of the growth of the blade of grass, nor is there any difficulty in understanding the terms in which it is stated; but the *fact* of the Trinity is denied, and the terms in which the fact is stated are admitted to be inexplicable.

Who that regards the subject in this light, can doubt the prevalence of Unitarianism in the West? Not that I expect its spread there, or elsewhere, will depend, wholly or chiefly, on the abilities or exertions of Unitarians themselves. Its spread, like that of the truth generally, must depend on the progress of civilization, the diffusion of useful knowledge among the people, and the general assertion and application of the great principles of

religious liberty and free inquiry. Men, acting as partizans, may do something to trouble the course of truth; something to retard it; and something, perhaps, under peculiar circumstances, to accelerate it. Mainly, however, it always has depended, and always must depend, on a multitude of causes, entirely independent of sectarian efforts growing out of the progress of society and the human mind, and operating as certainly and uncontrollably as the laws of nature. I do not suppose, therefore, that the people of the West are likely to become Unitarians, wholly or chiefly, through any influence exerted on them from abroad; but rather through the action of their own minds under existing circumstances and institutions, and under the new lights which will be continually breaking in upon them out of the Word of God.

Let me observe, further, that in expecting the spread of Unitarianism in the West, I do not suppose that the real convictions of the body of the people there are to undergo a great and sudden change. If large numbers are led, at the same time, from any cause, to lay aside one religious system and adopt another, I believe that, in most cases, it is not until their minds have passed through a gradual, though often an unperceived and unsuspected process, which makes the change, at last, but little more than a nominal change. Old terms, old names, old forms, are often retained, long after the opinions they were originally used to signify and enforce have been outgrown and abandoned. When, therefore, these at length are laid aside, it is not so much because the people would embrace new opinions, but because they would express more accurately those which they have long held. With regard to a large proportion of the serious and intelligent members of the community, I believe that if they

understood Unitarianism aright, and would take the trouble to compare it with their own convictions, they would find them to agree. They would find, many of them to their great surprise, not only that they are now, but that they always have been, Unitarians; believing that Jesus Christ is a distinct being from the Father, and that the Father alone is God.

I hope much, from the recent outbreakings of a free and inquisitive spirit in the churches of the West. It is "the morning spread upon the mountains." It is not in human nature, that the dwellers in the Great Valley should entertain low and narrow conceptions of that Being who has poured over their plains and along their rivers such plenty and glory. It is not in human nature, that a people who affect, and really exhibit, so much freedom and independence on all other subjects, should brook the tyranny of prejudice or party on the subject of religion. It is not in human nature, where every thing else is making progress with such unexampled rapidity, that religious knowledge and the religious character alone should remain fixed and stationary. Go on, I would say to a people so highly favored, go on to accomplish the sublime destinies which are opening before you in a commercial and political point of view. But in the midst of your unexampled prosperity and growth, forget not the corresponding necessity there is for the diffusion of such views of the Gospel, as the intelligent and influential members of the community will respect and can believe. For in this way, and in this way only, can the power of religion be made to come in, and take hold of the principles of human action operating amongst you under such intense excitement, and correct their errors, and restrain their excesses, and bring them under subjection to the LAW OF CHRIST.

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REMARKS

ON

CREEDS, INTOLERANCE, AND EXCLUSION.

By WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D.D.

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CREEDS.

REMARKS ON CREEDS.

My aversion to human creeds as bonds of Christian union, as conditions of Christian fellowship, as means of fastening chains on men's minds, constantly gains strength.

My first objection to them is that they separate us from Jesus Christ. To whom am I to go for my knowledge of the Christian religion, but to the Great Teacher, to the Son of God, to him in whom the fulness of the divinity dwelt. This is my great privilege as a Christian, that I may sit at the feet not of a human but divine master, that I may repair to him in whom truth lived and spoke without a mixture of error; who was eminently the Wisdom of God and the light of the world. And shall man dare to interpose between me and my heavenly guide and Saviour, and prescribe to me the articles of my Christian faith? What is the state of mind in which I shall best learn the truth? It is that, in which I forsake all other teachers for Christ, in which my mind is brought nearest to him; it is that in which I lay myself open most entirely

to the impressions of his mind. Let me go to Jesus with a human voice sounding in my ears, and telling me what I must hear from the Great Teacher, and how can I listen to him in singleness of heart? All protestant sects indeed tell the learner to listen to Jesus Christ; but most of them shout around him their own articles so vehemently and imperiously, that the voice of the heavenly master is well nigh drowned. He is told to listen to Christ, but told that he will be damned, if he receives any lessons but such as are taught in the creed. He is told that Christ's word is alone infallible, but that unless it is received as interpreted by fallible men, he will be excluded from the communion of Christians. This is what shocks me in the creed-maker. He interposes himself between me and my Saviour. He dares not trust me alone with Jesus. He dares not leave me to the word of God. This I cannot endure. The nearest possible communication with the mind of Christ, is my great privilege as a Christian. I must learn Christ's truth from Christ himself, as he speaks in the records of his life, and in the men whom he trained up, and supernaturally prepared to be his witnesses to the world. On what ground, I ask, do the creed-makers demand assent to their articles as condition of church membership or salvation? What has conferred on them infallibility? "Show me your proofs," I say to them, "of Christ speaking in you. Work some miracle. Utter some prophecy. Show me something divine in you, which other men do not possess. Is it possible that you are unaided men like myself, having no more right to interpret the New Testament than myself, and that you yet exalt your interpretations as infallible standards of truth, and the necessary conditions of salvation. Stand out of

my path. I wish to go to the master. Have you words of greater power than his? Can you speak to the human consciences or heart in a mightier voice than he? What is it which emboldens you to tell me what I must learn of Christ or be lost?"

I cannot but look on human creeds with feelings approaching contempt. When I bring them into contrast with the New Testament, into what insignificance do they sink! What are they? Skeletons, freezing abstractions, metaphysical expressions of unintelligible dogmas; and these I am to regard as the expositions of the fresh, living, infinite truth which came from Jesus! I might with equal propriety be required to hear and receive the lispings of infancy as the expressions of wisdom. Creeds are to the scriptures, what rushlights are to the sun. The creed-maker defines Jesus in half a dozen lines, perhaps in metaphysical terms, and calls me to assent to this account of my Saviour. I learn less of Christ by this process, than I should learn of the sun, by being told that this glorious luminary is a circle about a foot in diameter. There is but one way of knowing Christ. We must place ourselves near him, see him, hear him, follow him from his cross to the heavens, sympathize with him and obey him, and thus catch clear and bright glimpses of his divine glory.

Christian Truth is Infinite. Who can think of shutting it up in a few lines of an abstract creed? You might as well compress the boundless atmosphere, the fire, the all pervading light, the free winds of the universe, into separate parcels, and weigh and label them, as break up Christianity into a few propositions. Christianity is freer, more illimitable than the light or the winds. It is too

mighty to be bound down by man's puny hands. It is a spirit rather than a rigid doctrine, the spirit of boundless love. The Infinite cannot be defined and measured out like a human manufacture. It cannot be reduced to a system. It cannot be comprehended in a set of precise ideas. It is to be felt rather than described. The spiritual impressions which a true Christian receives from the character and teachings of Christ, and in which the chief efficacy of the religion lies, can be poorly brought out in words. Words are but brief, rude hints, of a Christian's mind. Its thoughts and feelings overflow them. To those who feel as he does, he can make himself known; for such can understand the tones of the heart; but he can no more lay down his religion in a series of abstract propositions, than he can make known by a few vague terms the expressive features and inmost soul of a much loved friend. It has been the fault of all sects, that they have been too anxious to define their religion. They have labored to circumscribe the infinite. Christianity, as it exists in the mind of the true disciple, is not made up of fragments, of separate ideas which he can express in detached propositions. It is a vast and ever unfolding whole, pervaded by one spirit, each precept and doctrine deriving its vitality from its union with all. When I see this generous, heavenly doctrine compressed and cramped in human creeds, I feel, as I should, were I to see screws and chains applied to the countenance and limbs of a noble fellow creature, deforming and destroying one of the most beautiful works of God.

From the Infinity of Christian truth, of which I have spoken, it follows that our views of it must always be very imperfect, and ought to be continually enlarged. The

wisest theologians are children who have caught but faint glimpses of the religion; who have taken but their first lessons; and whose business it is "to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." Need I say how hostile to this growth is a fixed creed beyond which we must never wander? Such a religion as Christ's demands the highest possible activity and freedom of the soul. Every new gleam of light should be welcomed with joy. Every hint should be followed out with eagerness. Every whisper of the divine voice in the soul should be heard. The love of Christian truth should be so intense, as to make us willing to part with all other things for a better comprehension of it. Who does not see that human creeds, setting bounds to thought, and telling us where all enquiry must stop, tend to repress this holy zeal, to shut our eyes on new illumination, to hem us within the beaten paths of man's construction, to arrest that perpetual progress which is the life and glory of an immortal mind.

It is another and great objection to creeds, that wherever they acquire authority, they interfere with that simplicity and godly sincerity, on which the efficacy of religious teaching very much depends. That a minister should speak with power, it is important that he should speak from his own soul, and not studiously conform himself to modes of speaking which others have adopted. It is important that he should give out the truth in the very form in which it presents itself to his mind, in the very words which offer themselves spontaneously as the clothing of his thoughts. To express our own minds frankly, directly, fearlessly, is the way to reach other minds. Now it is the effect of creeds to check this free utterance of thought. The minister must seek words which will

not clash with the consecrated articles of his church. If new ideas spring up in his mind, not altogether consonant with what the creed-monger has established, he must cover them with misty language. If he happen to doubt the standard of his church, he must strain its phraseology, must force it beyond its obvious import, that he may give his assent to it without departures from truth. All these processes must have a blighting effect on the mind and heart. They impair self-respect. They cloud the intellectual eye. They accustom men to tamper with truth. In proportion as a man dilutes his thought, and suppresses his conviction, to save his orthodoxy from suspicion; in proportion as he borrows his words from others instead of speaking in his own tongue; in proportion as he distorts language from its common use, that he may stand well with his party; in that proportion he clouds and degrades his intellect, as well as undermines the manliness and integrity of his character. How deeply do I commiserate the minister, who, in the warmth and freshness of youth, is visited with glimpses of higher truth than is embodied in the creed, but who dares not be just to himself, and is made to echo what is not the simple, natural expression of his own mind! Better were it for us to beg our bread and clothe ourselves in rags, than to part with Christian simplicity and frankness. Better for a minister to preach in barns or the open air, where he may speak the truth from the fulness of his soul, than to lift up in cathedrals, amidst pomp and wealth, a voice which is not true to his inward thoughts. If they who wear the chains of creeds, once knew the happiness of breathing the air of freedom, and of moving with an unincumbered spirit, no wealth or power in the world's gift would bribe them to part with their spiritual liberty.

Another sad effect of creeds is, that they favor unbelief. It is not the object of a creed to express the simple truths of our religion, though in these its efficiency chiefly lies, but to embody and decree those mysteries about which Christians have been contending. I use the word "mysteries," not in the scriptural but popular sense, as meaning doctrines which give a shock to the reason and seem to contradict some acknowledged truth. Such mysteries are the staples of creeds. The celestial virtues of Christ's character, these are not inserted into articles of faith. On the contrary, doctrines which from their darkness or unintelligibleness have provoked controversy, and which owe their importance very much to the circumstance of having been fought for or fought against for ages, these are thrown by the creed-makers into the foremost ranks of the religion, and made its especial representatives. Christianity as set forth in creeds is a propounder of dark sayings, of riddles, of knotty propositions, of apparent contradictions. Who, on reading these standards, would catch a glimpse of the simple, pure, benevolent, practical character of Christianity? And what is the result? Christianity becoming identified, by means of creeds, with so many dark doctrines, is looked on by many as a subject for theologians to quarrel about, but too thorny or perplexed for common minds, while it is spurned by many more as an insult on human reason, as a triumph of fanaticism over common sense.

It is a little remarkable that most creeds, whilst they abound in mysteries of human creation, have renounced the great mystery of religion. There is in religion a great mystery. I refer to the doctrine of Free-will or moral liberty. How to reconcile this with God's foreknowledge

and human dependence, is a question which has perplexed the greatest minds. It is probable that much of the obscurity arises from our applying to God the same kind of foreknowledge as men possess by their acquaintance with causes, and from our supposing the Supreme Being to bear the same relation to time as man. It is probable that juster views on these subjects will relieve the freedom of the will from some of its difficulties. Still the difficulties attending it are great. It is a mystery in the popular sense of the word. Now is it not strange that theologians who have made and swallowed so many other mysteries, have generally rejected this, and rejected it on the ground of objections less formidable than those which may be urged against their own inventions? A large part of the protestant world have sacrificed man's freedom of will to God's foreknowledge and sovereignty, thus virtually subverting all religion, all duty, all responsibility. They have made man a machine and destroyed the great distinction between him and the brute. There seems a fatality attending creeds. After burdening Christianity with mysteries of which it is as innocent as the unborn child, they have generally renounced the real mystery of religion, of human nature. They have subverted the foundation of moral government, by taking from man the only capacity which makes him responsible, and in this way have fixed on the commands and threatenings of God the character of a cruel despotism. What a lesson against man's attempting to impose his wisdom on his fellow creatures as the truth of God.

INTOLERANCE AND EXCLUSION.

It is truly astonishing that Christians are not more impressed with the unbecoming spirit, the arrogant style of those who deny the Christian character to professed and exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, because they differ in opinion on some of the most subtile and difficult subjects of theology. A stranger, at hearing the language of these denouncers, would conclude, without a doubt, that they were clothed with infallibility, and were appointed to sit in judgment on their brethren. But for myself, I know not a shadow of pretence for the language of superiority assumed by our adversaries. Are they exempted from the common frailty of our nature? Has God given them superior intelligence? Were they educated under circumstances more favorable to improvement than those whom they condemn? Have they brought to the Scriptures more serious, anxious, and unwearied attention? Or do their lives express a deeper reverence for God and for his Son? No. They are fallible, imperfect men, possessing no higher means, and no stronger motives for studying the word of God, than their Unitarian brethren. And yet their language to them is virtually this; — "We pronounce you to be in error, and in most dangerous error. We know that we are right, and that you are wrong, in regard to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. You are unworthy the Christian name, and unfit to sit with us at the table of Christ. We offer you the truth, and you reject it at the peril of your souls." Such is the language of humble Christians to men, who in capacity and apparent piety are not inferior to themselves. This language

has spread from the leaders through a considerable part of the community. Men in those walks of life which leave them without leisure or opportunities for improvement, are heard to decide on the most intricate points, and to pass sentence on men whose lives have been devoted to the study of the scriptures. The female, forgetting the tenderness of her sex, and the limited advantages which her education affords for a critical study of the scriptures, inveighs with bitterness against the damnable errors of such men as Newton, Locke, Clarke and Price! The young, too, forget the modesty which belongs to their age, and hurl condemnation on the head which has grown gray in the service of God and mankind. Need I ask, whether this spirit of denunciation for supposed error becomes the humble and fallible disciples of Jesus Christ?

In vindication of this system of exclusion and denunciation, it is often urged, that the "honor of religion," the "purity of the church," and the "cause of truth," forbid those who hold the true gospel, to maintain fellowship with those who support corrupt and injurious opinions. Without stopping to notice the modesty of those who claim an exclusive knowledge of the true gospel, I would answer, that the "honor of religion" can never suffer by admitting to Christian fellowship men of irreproachable lives, whilst it has suffered most severely from that narrow and uncharitable spirit, which has excluded such men for imagined errors. I answer again, that "the cause of truth" can never suffer by admitting to Christian fellowship men who honestly profess to make the scriptures their rule of faith and practice, whilst it has suffered most severely by substituting for this standard conformity to human creeds and formularies. It is truly wonderful, if

excommunication for supposed error be the method of purifying the church, that the church has been so long and so wofully corrupted. Whatever may have been the deficiencies of Christians in other respects, they have certainly discovered no criminal reluctance in applying this instrument of purification. Could the thunders and lightnings of excommunication have corrected the atmosphere of the church, not one pestilential vapor would have loaded it for ages. The air of Paradise would not have been more pure, more refreshing. But what does history tell us? It tells us, that the spirit of exclusion and denunciation has contributed more than all other causes to the corruption of the church, to the diffusion of error; and has rendered the records of the Christian community as black, as bloody, as revolting to humanity, as the records of empires founded on conquest and guilt.

But it is said, Did not the apostle denounce the erroneous, and pronounce a curse on the "abettors of another gospel?" This is the strong hold of the friends of denunciation. But let us never forget, that the apostles were inspired men, capable of marking out with unerring certainty those who substituted "another gospel" for the true. Show us their successors, and we will cheerfully obey them.

It is also important to recollect the character of those men, against whom the apostolic anathema was directed. They were men who knew distinctly what the apostles taught, and yet opposed it; and who endeavored to sow division, and to gain followers, in the churches which the apostles had planted. These men, resisting the known instructions of the authorised and inspired teachers of the gospel, and discovering a factious, selfish, mercenary

spirit, were justly excluded as unworthy the Christian name. But what in common with these men have the Christians whom it is the custom of the "Orthodox" to denounce? Do these oppose what they know to be the doctrine of Christ and his apostles? Do they not revere Jesus and his inspired messengers? Do they not dissent from their brethren, simply because they believe that their brethren dissent from their Lord? — Let us not forget that the contest at the present day is not between the apostles themselves and men who oppose their known instructions, but between uninspired Christians, who equally receive the apostles as authorised teachers of the gospel, and who only differ in judgment as to the interpretations of their writings. How unjust, then, is it for any class of Christians, to confound their opponents with the factious and unprincipled sectarians of the primitive age. Mistake in judgment is the heaviest charge which one denomination has now a right to urge against another; and do we find that the apostles ever denounced mistake as "awful and fatal hostility" to the gospel, that they pronounced anathemas on men who wished to obey, but who misapprehended their doctrines? The apostles well remembered, that none ever mistook more widely than themselves. They remembered, too, the lenity of their Lord towards their errors, and this lenity they cherished and labored to diffuse.

But it is asked, Have not Christians a right to bear "solemn testimony" against opinions which are "utterly subversive of the gospel, and most dangerous to men's eternal interests?" To this I answer, that the opinions of men, who discover equal intelligence and piety with ourselves, are entitled to respectful consideration. If

after inquiry they seem erroneous and injurious, we are authorised and bound, according to our ability, to expose, by fair and serious argument, their nature and tendency. But I maintain, that we have no right as individuals, or in an associated capacity, to bear our "solemn testimony" against these opinions, by menacing with ruin the Christian who listens to them, or by branding them with the most terrifying epithets, for the purpose of preventing candid inquiry into their truth. This is the fashionable mode of "bearing testimony," and it is a weapon which will always be most successful in the hands of the proud, the positive, and overbearing, who are most impatient of contradiction, and have least regard to the rights of their brethren.

But whatever may be the right of Christians, as to bearing testimony against opinions which they deem injurious, I deny that they have any right to pass a condemning sentence, on account of these opinions, on the characters of men whose general deportment is conformed to the gospel of Christ. Both scripture and reason unite in teaching, that the best and only standard of character is the life; and he who overlooks the testimony of a Christian life, and grounds a sentence of condemnation on opinions, about which he as well as his brother may err, violates most flagrantly the duty of just and candid judgment, and opposes the peaceful and charitable spirit of the gospel. Jesus Christ says, "By their fruits shall ye know them." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "He that heareth and doeth these my sayings," i. e. the precepts of

the Sermon on the Mount, "I will liken him to a man who built his house upon a rock." It would be easy to multiply similar passages. The whole scriptures teach us, that he and he only is a Christian, whose life is governed by the precepts of the gospel, and that by this standard alone, the profession of this religion should be tried. We do not deny that our brethren have a right to form a judgment as to our Christian character. But we insist that we have a right to be judged by the fairest, the most approved, and the most settled rules, by which character can be tried; and when these are overlooked, and the most uncertain standard is applied, we are injured; and an assault on character, which rests on this ground, deserves no better name than defamation and persecution.

I know that this suggestion of persecution will be indignantly repelled by those who deal most largely in denunciation. But persecution is a wrong or injury inflicted for opinions; and surely assaults on character fall under this definition. Some persons seem to think that persecution consists in pursuing error with fire and sword; and that therefore it has ceased to exist, except in distempered imaginations, because no class of Christians among us is armed with those terrible weapons. But no. The form is changed, but the spirit lives. Persecution has given up its halter and fagot, but it breathes venom from its lips, and secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy. For example, a Liberal minister, however circumspect in his walk, however irreproachable in all his relations, no sooner avows his honest convictions on some of the most difficult subjects, than his name begins to be a by-word. A thousand suspicions are infused into his hearers; and it is insinuated, that he is a minister of Sa-

tan, in "the guise of an angel of light." At a little distance from his home, calumny assumes a bolder tone. He is pronounced an infidel, and it is gravely asked, whether he believes in a God. At a greater distance, his morals are assailed. He is a man of the world, "leading souls to hell," to gratify the most selfish passions. But notwithstanding all this, he must not say a word about persecution, for reports like these rack no limbs; they do not even injure a hair of his head; and how then is he persecuted? — Now for myself, I am as willing that my adversary should take my purse or my life, as that he should rob me of my reputation, rob me of the affection of my friends, and of my means of doing good. "He who takes from me my good name," takes the best possession of which human power can deprive me. It is true, that a Christian's reputation is comparatively a light object; and so is his property, so is his life; all are light things to him, whose hope is full of immortality. But, of all worldly blessings, an honest reputation is to many of us the most precious; and he who robs us of it, is the most injurious of mankind, and among the worst of persecutors. Let not the friends of denunciation attempt to escape this charge, by pleading their sense of duty, and their sincere desire to promote the cause of truth. St. Dominic was equally sincere, when he built the Inquisition; and I doubt not that many torturers of Christians have fortified their reluctant minds, at the moment of applying the rack and the burning iron, by the sincere conviction, that the cause of truth required the sacrifice of its foes. I beg that these remarks may not be applied indiscriminately to the party called "Orthodox," among whom are multitudes, whose humility and charity would revolt from mak-

ing themselves the standards of Christian piety, and from assailing the Christian character of their brethren.

Many other considerations may be added to those which have been already urged, against the system of excluding from Christian fellowship men of upright lives, on account of their opinions. It necessarily generates perpetual discord in the church. Men differ in opinions as much as in features. No two minds are perfectly accordant. The shades of belief are infinitely diversified. Amidst this immense variety of sentiment, every man is right in his own eyes. Every man discovers errors in the creed of his brother. Every man is prone to magnify the importance of his own peculiarities, and to discover danger in the peculiarities of others. This is human nature. Every man is partial to his own opinions, because they are his own, and his self-will and pride are wounded by contradiction. Now what must we expect, when beings so erring, so divided in sentiment, and so apt to be unjust to the views of others, assert the right of excluding one another from the Christian church on account of imagined error? As the scriptures confine this right to no individual and to no body of Christians, it belongs alike to all; and what must we expect, when Christians of all capacities and dispositions, the ignorant, prejudiced, and self-conceited, imagine it their duty to prescribe opinions to Christendom, and to open or to shut the door of the church according to the decision which their neighbors may form on some of the most perplexing points of theology? This question, unhappily, has received answer upon answer in ecclesiastical history. We there see Christians denouncing and excommunicating one another for supposed error, until every denomination has been

pronounced accursed by some portion of the Christian world; so that were the curses of men to prevail, not one human being would enter heaven. To me it appears, that to plead for the right of excluding men of blameless lives, on account of their opinions, is to sound the peal of perpetual and universal war. * * * * *

Another argument against this practice of denouncing the supposed errors of sincere professors of Christianity, is this. It exalts to supremacy in the church, men who have the least claim to influence. Humble, meek, and affectionate Christians are least disposed to make creeds for their brethren, and to denounce those who differ from them. On the contrary, the impetuous, proud, and enthusiastic, men who cannot or will not weigh the arguments of opponents, are always most positive, and most unsparing in denunciation. These take the lead in a system of exclusion. They have no false modesty, no false charity, to shackle their zeal in framing fundamentals for their brethren, and in punishing the obstinate in error. The consequence is, that creeds are formed, which exclude from Christ's church some of his truest followers, which outrage reason as well as revelation, and which subsequent ages are obliged to mutilate and explain away, lest the whole religion be rejected by men of reflection. Such has been the history of the church. It is strange that we do not learn wisdom from the past. What man, who feels his own fallibility, who sees the errors into which the positive and "orthodox" of former times have been betrayed, and who considers his own utter inability to decide on the degree of truth, which every mind, of every capacity, must receive in order to salvation, will not tremble at the responsibility of pre-

scribing to his brethren, in his own words, the views they must maintain on the most perplexing subjects of religion? Humility will always leave this work to others.

Another important consideration is, that this system of excluding men of apparent sincerity, for their opinions, entirely subverts free inquiry into the scriptures. When once a particular system is surrounded by this bulwark; when once its defenders have brought the majority to believe that the rejection of it is a mark of depravity and perdition, what but the name of liberty is left to Christians? The obstacles to inquiry are as real, and may be as powerful, as in the neighborhood of the Inquisition. The multitude dare not think, and the thinking dare not speak. The right of private judgment may thus, in a Protestant country, be reduced to a nullity. It is true, that men are sent to the scriptures; but they are told before they go, that they will be driven from the church on earth and in heaven, unless they find in the scriptures the doctrines which are embodied in the popular creed. They are told, indeed, to inquire for themselves; but they are also told, at what points inquiry must arrive; and the sentence of exclusion hangs over them, if they happen to stray, with some of the best and wisest men, into forbidden paths. Now this "Protestant liberty" is, in one respect, more irritating than Papal bondage. It mocks as well as enslaves us. It talks to us courteously as friends and brethren, whilst it rivets our chains. It invites and even charges us to look with our own eyes, but with the same breath warns us against seeing anything which Orthodox eyes have not seen before us. Is this a state of things favorable to serious inquiry into the truths of the gospel; yet, how long has the church been groaning under this cruel yoke?

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CHARGES

AGAINST

UNITARIANISM.

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OBJECTIONS TO UNITARIANISM.

We propose, in this tract, to consider briefly some of the more common objections made to the views of Unitarians. We shall not dwell on them, for we suppose that they are objections which have no intrinsic weight with any thinking man. It would not be worth the while to speak of them at all, were it not that the unthinking attribute a force to them proportioned very much to the number of times they hear them repeated. We shall speak of the objections, as they occur, without any particular order. It is said:

I. UNITARIANISM IS GOOD AS FAR AS IT GOES, BUT DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH.

The Orthodox have done in this case what men have often done before; — they have brought against others the charge to which they themselves are peculiarly obnoxious.

Had not the phrase been so monopolized by others, that it might, to some, sound paradoxical, we should say what is the strict and literal truth, that the reason why

Unitarians reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, is that they do not go far enough. We look on those doctrines as an approach to the truth — the dawn that precedes the sunrise — a great advance beyond Jewish, heathen and philosophic errors; but not an advance up to the full measure of christian truth. We think that the Calvinists are on the right road, — but they stop at the half-way house to pure christianity — they do not come far enough. The doctrine of the Trinity is an example. The mass of men unenlightened by revelation, have always been polytheists. The christian doctrine that there is but one God, the Maker and Ruler of all things, is so vast and sublime, that it has ever been a most difficult truth for the world to learn. The ignorant heathen knew nothing of it; — the philosophers who received it, were few, if any; and for a long time, it was preserved among the Jews, only by the blazing testimony of miracle. The Trinitarian, although he hesitates at admitting this great truth in its simplicity as taught by Moses and by Christ, is infinitely in advance of the polytheism of the heathen multitude — the scepticism of the philosophers — the faltering faith of the Jews. He does not come far enough, but he is on the right road. He professes to believe, and does *almost* believe in the strict unity of God. The difference between him and the Unitarian is, that the latter goes a little farther, and believes it entirely, consistently, and without qualification.

So it is with the other doctrines of Calvinism. They are the opinions of men who halt between Judaism and their own speculations in philosophy and christianity. They may travel slowly and with fear, but they are on the right road.

II. UNITARIANS SET UP THE AUTHORITY OF HUMAN REASON ABOVE THAT OF REVELATION.

It is a calumny. Unitarians do no such thing; and every intelligent man knows that the charge is false. Unitarians receive the Bible as of supreme authority in deciding all matters belonging to religious faith or practice. From its decision there is no appeal. They bow to it as the supreme law. Its commands are the commands of God. Unitarians use their reason — their understanding — not to pronounce what the Bible shall teach, but to see what it does teach. And is it not every one's duty to do this? Take away reason from a man, or what is the same thing, let him cease to use it, and he is an idiot. Surely no one pretends that a mind reduced to idiocy is in the best state for a profitable reading of the Scriptures. To understand what you read, you must make use of the understanding. Not to do this is to attempt to see without using the eyes. The truth is, that the real difficulty with Unitarians is not, that they use their reason in reading the scriptures, but that, use it never so much, they cannot discover the doctrines of Calvin in the inspired writings. A man may use his understanding as much as he pleases, provided that he find these doctrines between the lids of the Bible. But till Unitarians find these doctrines, (though until that time they show their reverence for the Bible by rejecting them,) they will be subjected to the same calumnious charge of setting reason above inspiration.

III. UNITARIANS RELY FOR SALVATION ON THEIR OWN MERITS.

As this objection is so commonly made and believed, and is altogether erroneous, we answer explicitly, and

say, that they rely on no such thing. From the unmerited goodness of God, comes every good gift. For all the blessings of this life — for this sunshine — this healthful air — this green and bountiful earth — for all that we love, and for all that makes life blessed, we give thanks to the goodness of God. For all our hopes of happiness hereafter, we trust, solely and only, to his goodness. We talk not of *merit* and *desert* when we speak of him from whom we receive all, and to whom we can return nothing. *Gratitude*, not *merit*, is the word for the frail, sinful, long-spared and much-forgiven child of the earth.

IV. UNITARIANS RELY ON GOOD WORKS FOR SALVATION.

We answer that so far as good works merit any thing, they do not rely on them. But how is it with those who use the phrase *good works*, in such a contemptuous manner? Surely they do not expect to be saved by evil works. Do they not believe that he who would be happy must lead a life of honesty and usefulness, of virtue and piety? — that every sin separates a man from Heaven, and that every virtue brings him nearer Heaven? It is indeed of the mercy of God, solely, and not because of our own deserts, that we are able to look for Heaven at all, or even for existence beyond this life; but every man who hopes to enter Heaven, hopes to enter it by the road of a good life, that is, of good works.

Let it not be said that a man's works may be good, and his character and purpose evil. They cannot be so in any true sense. The important part in the 'works' of a moral being, is the part done out of sight, in his moral nature. His works consist not chiefly (and so far as character is concerned, not at all,) of what is seen by others, of what the

hand does or tongue utters, but of what the heart desires, the mind seeks, the will prompts. The motive is not something separate from the work, but the main part of the work. Are men in earnest in speaking of good works, in this, the true sense, as worthless?

Good works nothing! What then is religion for? For what are the commands of Christ to be just and kind, and pure and devout? For what are the laws of Revelation; for what is conscience set within us responding to revelation, and approving or condemning as we do well or ill; for what are futurity and its sanctions revealed, except for this one thing, — to enforce the practice of good works. Good works! — the good life! — a christian life! — it is what God loves and blesses. Good works nothing! The one good work of the poor widow, when she cast her mite into the treasury, was worth more than all the prayers and professions of the Pharisee, though he wore the very pavements of the temple with his bended knees.

V. UNITARIANISM IS A GOOD RELIGION TO LIVE BY, BUT A BAD ONE TO DIE BY.

We answer that this is impossible. That which is really good to live by, must be good to die by. God is not hostile to himself; and that which is really good for this world — good for the soul — is good for the soul forever. The soul does not live under one set of laws here, and another opposite to them hereafter; but the laws of its peace and progress and hope now, must be the same, or consistent with, those of its peace and progress forever.

What do they mean, who make this objection? Do they mean that Unitarians teach a lax morality? So far from it, one of the great objections to Unitarianism is, that it relies too much (to use the stigmatizing phrase,)

on *mere* morality.—Mere morality! as if that which is enjoined by conscience and by Deity — that, to enforce which, the dread sanctions of eternity are unveiled, that which is the strength of the individual soul, and which Almighty God has made to be the bond which holds the moral universe together, as if that were to be stigmatized by a worm of the dust, as mere morality!

What then do they mean? Do they mean that Unitarians do not inculcate religious duties? — the religious spirit and life? Is purity of heart — is piety toward God, the love of the universal Father — a confiding faith in his Paternal Providence, or our accountableness to him who is the God and Judge of the soul, less inculcated by Unitarians, than by others? Not at all. This is not objected to them.

What then renders Unitarianism unsafe to die by? Will not he who lives up to, and lives out a system that requires of the sinner that he must repent of, and forsake his sins, — that he must forgive, if he would be forgiven — must show mercy and kindness to others if he would have God show mercy to him in his hour of extremity; — a system which teaches that a man must lead a peaceable, pious and blameless life, in all godliness and honesty, which enforces a life of usefulness and faith, and prayer, which teaches men to look to Christ as a Saviour, to God as a Father and to repentance and reformation from sin as the ground of forgiveness, will not he who lives up to this system meet with acceptance with God? We know not what men may say, nor does it greatly interest us to know; but we do know what Almighty God declares through the inspired interpreters of his will. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accept-

ed?" "What, saith the prophet, "doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God!" "Pure religion," says the Apostle, "and undefiled before God the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

What then is the meaning of the charge that Unitarianism is a good religion to live by, but a bad one to die by! It is a mere meaningless phrase of censure. They who use it, know not whereof they affirm. It is one of those successfully worded phrases, wherein a self-complacent vanity is mingled with a stigma thrown on others, which being once uttered, is caught up again by the ignorant and unthinking, and repeated, parrot-like, when they have nothing else to say against opinions which they feel nevertheless that they must at all hazards condemn.

VI. UNITARIANS DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It is a mistake. Unitarians do believe in those influences. This whole material world is but an organ through which the divine spirit acts on our spirits. As one mind acts on another mind through the intervening agency of the senses, so through this material world and the course of his Providence the infinite mind acts on us.

And far more than this. They believe that God has immediate access to the springs of action within the soul; that, through influences suited to and consistent with our natures, he is ever drawing us to himself; and that as a parent aids a child, so he is ever ready to aid those who seek and are prepared to receive his aid. If we are deficient, it is not in our faith, but in our hearts and our lives. Alas! that it is so. When we think of our guilty

ingratitude for the constant mercies of God, and how by our sins we close up our hearts against the gentle influences of his spirit, we need not the denunciations of others to break down any thing like spiritual pride. Our own hearts condemn us. In our unworthiness, we are humbled (and what man lives who is not) to the earth, and are ready to cast ourselves down and lay our mouths in the dust and cry, unclean! unclean! O Father of mercies, suffer not our ingratitude to cause thee to withdraw thy holy influences from our souls!

VII. UNITARIANS REJECT MYSTERY.

Unitarians do not reject mystery. The material and the spiritual worlds are alike enveloped in mysteries. The thought can hardly move one step forward without entering within the shade of mystery. This throbbing pulse, the action of the mind, nay, the unfolding or decay of a single leaf on the tree that overshadows my window, suggests mysteries which no man can fathom. But what is a mystery? It is something unknown — something that eludes the search of our minds — something unrevealed and undisclosed to us.

Unitarians believe that Christ, whose office it was "to bear witness to the Truth," came not to bring darkness into the world, but light. He came not to increase the number of mysteries, but to reveal and do them away.

Instead of more, there are not as many mysteries in the world now, as before Christianity. Before Christ came, the character of God, a future life, heaven, hell, duty, all were mysteries. Christ has taught us of these things, and so far as he has taught us, they have ceased to be mysteries. To the heathen mother, mourning for her child, as she laid it away in the grave, and

looked forward to the future, and in her anguish asked if it should live hereafter, to her, all the future was covered with mystery. But now the mystery is gone. Standing by her child's grave, the Christian mother looks up and knows that her child is "not dead but sleeps," and shall awake to live forever with him, who when on earth took little children in his arms, and laid his hands on them, and blessed them, and said, of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Unitarians see as many mysteries in religion as others, but do not understand that they are intended for matters of faith. The *secret* things belong unto the Lord our God, but those that are *revealed* belong unto us and our children.* As no one can believe any thing about that of which he knows nothing, Unitarians do not perceive how they can believe any thing more concerning mysteries, than simply that they exist.

VIII. UNITARIANS REJECT THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION.

Let our brethren be at length persuaded that we do not reject it. We believe as much as they do, that the sinner who would enjoy the happiness of heaven, must repent — must be born again. We believe that in his soul, the dominion of the world must give place to that of the religion of the cross. We believe that the principles of earth must be subdued to those of heaven, — and the love of self, to the love of God and of man. We believe that they unto whom the knowledge of Christ has come, if they would enjoy the blessedness which he has gone to prepare for them who love him, must become like him.

* Deut. xxix, 29.

We believe that in every man — born as he is at first, a creature of the senses and of the earth, — there must be a new birth of the spiritual, and that he must put off the image of the earthy and put on the image of the heavenly We may not use the same language to express this change that many use, we may differ from them as to the mode in which it is brought about; but its reality, its necessity, its magnitude, are not less in our view than in theirs.

IX. UNITARIANS REJECT THE DOCTRINE OF A FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

Unitarians do not reject this doctrine. They believe that it is taught in Scripture and confirmed by reason. They believe that there is not a thought permitted to dwell in the mind, nor a desire indulged in the heart, nor an action performed, which does not mingle with the flowing current of our being, to reappear again in the form of a retribution of good or evil, according to its nature. They believe that every unrepented sin becomes a worm that dies not, a fire that is not quenched, in the soul itself. Though many may hope that in the fiery trials of eternity the soul may become purified from the sins which are its ruin, this hope does not affect the reality of a righteous retribution. But in this matter we presume not to lift the veil off the future, farther than revelation has done it. In the book of God we believe it to be taught, and we believe it therefore to be true, that the connexion between sin and suffering is eternal, even as the connexion between virtue and happiness is eternal.

X. UNITARIANS REJECT THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

Unitarians do not reject the doctrine of human depravity. They believe that man is by nature imperfect; tha-

there is no man lives and sinneth not; that the world is full of acquired depravity; that earth is blackened, and heaven defied by human sins.

But if by the doctrine of depravity is meant the doctrine of native and total depravity, most certainly we reject it. Would you have us believe that God is bringing into the world generation after generation of fiends? Would you have us imagine that a holy God finds his pleasure and employment in creating moral corruption? The Devil when he does the worst, can only *tempt* the human soul to evil; shall we imagine that God *creates* it utterly evil at the outset? We dare not, so horrible is it, even write down the consequences that must follow as to the character of God, if this doctrine be true.

Most certainly we reject this doctrine. It is taught in confessions of faith, but it is not taught in the Bible.

Does any one believe it? Does any one believe that man is born, (we use the words of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith,) "wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body," "utterly indisposed, *disabled* and *made opposite to all good*, and *wholly* inclined to all evil?" Do you, mother! believe this of your little child, who last night wept because she had displeased you, whose countenance glowed with pleasure because she met your approval, who knelt by your side to whisper her infant prayers, and went to sleep, happy in the thought that the angels of God watched over her pillow.

To be totally depraved — opposite to all good — wholly inclined to all evil — is a fearful thing. It means the irresistible propensity to encourage and to commit

every possible crime and sin. Believing this, what man would dare to marry an unregenerate wife? She would pour poison into his ear while he slept. The parent who believed in this doctrine must live in constant dread, lest his first born should lift its childish hands and strangle the infant in the cradle. Should we venture to seek in a court of justice protection against wrong? We should find there only abettors of the evil-doer — judge and jury leagued together by the invincible necessity of their natures to oppose the right, and to sustain all cruelty and injustice. The implacable evil in their souls would force men on to all iniquity, even in defiance of their own self-interest.

Were this doctrine true, every family, every village, every city would be a miniature hell, and what is most horrible of all, a hell created by the Father of man!

Were this doctrine true, man could not live with man. Each would be the foe of the other, except when they united in hollow truce, that a multitude might perpetrate some enormous iniquity, too vast for an individual's efforts. Mutual distrust, mutual hate, the common desire of doing evil would destroy every bond, and the vast fabric of society would be heaved up, and shattered from corner to key stone, as if a volcano had burst from beneath.

Would the few righteous save the world? They would be swept off like chaff before the besom of destruction.

The bare existence of society, of social union, of domestic ties, is of itself a sufficient proof of the falsehood of this doctrine.

But it is answered, "We do not understand this doctrine as you state it." This we are happy to believe.

But why then use creeds and language that teach it, and which must lead all who confide in them into error ?

If no more is meant by this doctrine than that man is created imperfect, as every created being must be from the necessity of the case, Unitarians believe it. If it is meant that a mere social morality, though necessary to a christian life, is not of itself sufficient to constitute a devout christian, after the pattern of Christ, this we believe. If it is meant only that all have wandered far from rectitude, and that the lives of the best even, are dark with ingratitude and sin, all this we believe and deplore. But we believe that this sin arises from the voluntary perversion of the moral agency with which God has endowed us, and which renders us competent to do and be good, as well as evil.

But this faith has no affinity with that which teaches that our souls are stamped with a curse by our Maker, sent from his hands into this world, incapable of aught but corruption — which implies, that he who mocks God with blasphemies and curses, is but acting out the irresistible tendences of a nature of which God is the author ; which teaches that all actual sins proceed from this original corruption, and that because of this original sin, as well as of the actual and necessary sins proceeding therefrom, all (save those who "without foresight of faith or good works" are snatched by the supernatural power of God from the abyss,) "are cast into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels forever." If not to believe this monstrous doctrine, found not in the Bible, but born of a pagan philosophy, mingled with the logic of

the dark ages, if not to believe this be a heresy, then is our faith a heresy.

XI. UNITARIANS REJECT THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

We answer that Unitarians do not reject the doctrine of Atonement. Indeed, in the sense that it is probably understood by the mass of the Orthodox, Unitarians reject scarcely a single mode in which that doctrine is taught. Their great objection to the popular doctrine is not, that it is not substantially true as far as it goes, but that it does not go far enough — does not cover the whole ground — does not embrace the whole truth.

Among the different christian sects, there are almost as many different forms in which this doctrine is received; while each sect claims to have the whole truth, and denounces all other sects for their errors. One teaches that Christ died in man's *stead;* another that he died for man's *sake.* This man teaches, that through Christ's death, God would show in the most moving manner his abhorrence of sin; that man, that it was intended to complete that living gospel, his life, and to exert a moral influence on man; and another, that its object was to set a seal which could never be broken, on the written gospel, whose purpose is to reclaim man from sin. Of these, or the other forms which this doctrine has taken, which is true? Unitarians answer, *they are all true* — true, at least in substance, as far as they go, and as far as they have any real presence in the faith of the generality of men.

Each sect has a fragment of the doctrine. The error consists in supposing that this fragment is the whole doctrine, or in exaggerating its relative importance.

It is, as if several different travellers should visit the same scene and each should be struck with a different part. One describes a temple that from the brow of a hill overlooks the cultured farms, the peaceful homes, the smoke curling up from the scattered roofs into the still morning air, the country quiet and seclusion from the world's toils and strifes. Another describes the high mountain ranges that environ and shut in this vale, large enough to be the amphitheatre in which the armies of hostile nations might decide their contests. Another in all this scene describes only a small and beautiful river which comes down from the openings in the hills, and which as it winds on, now loses itself in the woodlands, and then shines out in the open valley, till its course is lost again among the mountains. Each of these descriptions is correct as far as it goes, but all must be put together before the whole scene would be truly described. Or to take an illustration drawn from the times. The calamities that now press so heavily on our country have probably sprung from a great variety of causes, combined and acting together. Yet every one you meet, is anxious to find some single cause which shall account for every thing. All the thousand causes referred to, may have had more or less influence in bringing on the present state of things, but each individual attributes the misfortunes of the times to a single source. That cause fills his mind — he exaggerates its influence — it seems to him the parent monster of all the evil he witnesses. This man mistakes a part of the truth for the whole — and distorts that fragment of the truth; and yet he has a fragment of the truth.

So with the doctrine of the Atonement. Of the various forms in which this doctrine has appeared, not one probably is absolutely false. Each sect has a fragment of the truth. The difficulty is, that this fragment has its relative importance exaggerated, and is itself generally distorted and encrusted with one error or another. But still, in the midst there is a truth. What is wanted is, that all these fragments should be united, be freed from foreign admixtures, made to balance and modify each other, and from the whole, the true doctrine of the Atonement would emerge in all its divine proportions. Unitarians do not reject the doctrine of the Atonement then, unless it be called rejection to believe that there is scarce one of these contending sects which has not some portion (though it may sometimes be exaggerated and distorted,) of the great truth. They may reject particular things said about the doctrine, but not the doctrine itself.

This doctrine is indeed one of the chief doctrines of the gospel. The doctrine of the Atonement is the doctrine of Reconciliation — the bringing of men, who had wandered from God, back to peace and union with him. This is implied in the very word, "Atonement"— at-one-ment. Atone—atonement—is, to be at one, reconciled, reconciliation. Such was the meaning of the words when the Bible was translated, though they have now acquired a theological meaning that hides in some degree their real sense. In accordance with this, in the New Testament, the words rendered "atone," "atonement," are most commonly rendered by the words "reconcile," "reconciliation." The Atonement consists in whatever Christ did to effect this reconciliation — to restore man to peace and

union with God. And this was not done by his death alone, nor by one act of his life. It was wrought out, not in one hour, nor by one deed. The great ministry of the Atonement was made up of all that our Saviour did and suffered, and taught. It commenced with his Sermon on the Mount. It was carried on through all his teachings — its darkest hour was on the cross — its triumphant one, when he ascended to his God. It survives livingly in the gospel, and every prodigal child of earth reclaimed by it from sin, and brought back to be a child of God, is now feeling its benign power.

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A

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY

OF THE

REV. NOAH WORCESTER, D.D.

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It was the great purpose of Christ to create the world anew, to make a deep, broad, enduring change in human beings. He came to breathe his own soul into men, to bring them through faith into a connexion and sympathy with himself, by which they would receive his divine virtue, as the branches receive quickening influences from the vine in which they abide, and the limbs from the head to which they are vitally bound.

It was especially the purpose of Jesus Christ, to redeem men from the slavery of selfishness, to raise them to a divine, disinterested love. By this he intended that his followers should be known, that his religion should be broadly divided from all former institutions. He meant that this should be worn as a frontlet on the brow, should beam as a light from the countenance, should shed a grace over the manners, should give tones of sympathy to the voice, and especially should give energy to the will, energy to do and suffer for other's

good. Here is one of the grand distinctions of Christianity, incomparably grander than all the mysteries which have borne its name. Our knowledge of Christianity is to be measured, not by the laboriousness with which we have dived into the depths of theological systems, but by our comprehension of the nature, extent, energy and glory of that disinterested principle, which Christ enjoined as our likeness to God, and as the perfection of human nature.

This disinterestedness of Christianity is to be learned from Christ himself, and from no other. It had dawned on the world before in illustrious men, in prophets, sages and legislators. But its full orb rose at Bethlehem. All the preceding history of the world gives but broken hints of the love which shone forth in Christ. Nor can this be learned from his precepts alone. We must go to his life, especially to his cross. His cross was the throne of his love. There it reigned, there it triumphed. On the countenance of the crucified Savior there was one expression stronger than of dying agony, — the expression of calm, meek, unconquered, boundless love. I repeat it, the cross alone can teach us the energy and grandeur of the love, which Christ came to impart. There we see its illimitableness; for he died for the whole world. There we learn its inexhaustible placability, for he died for the very enemies whose hands were reeking with his blood. There we learn its self-immolating strength; for he resigned every good of life, and endured intensest pains, in the cause of our race. There we learn its spiritual elevation; for he died not to enrich men with outward and worldly goods, but to breathe new life, health, purity, into the soul. There we learn its far-

reaching aim; for he died to give immortality of happiness. There we learn its tenderness and sympathy; for amidst his cares for the world, his heart overflowed with gratitude and love for his honored mother. There, in a word, we learn its Divinity; for he suffered through his participation of the spirit and his devotion to the purposes of God, through unity of heart and will with his Heavenly Father.

It is one of our chief privileges, as Christians, that we have in Jesus Christ a revelation of Perfect Love. This great idea comes forth to us from his life and teaching, as a distinct and bright reality. To understand this is to understand Christianity. To call forth in us a corresponding energy of disinterested affection, is the mission which Christianity has to accomplish on the earth.

There is one characteristic of the love of Christ, to which the Christian world are now waking up as from long sleep, and which is to do more than all things for the renovation of the world. He loved individual man. Before his time, the most admired form of goodness was patriotism. Men loved their country, but cared nothing for their fellow creatures beyond the limits of country, and cared little for the individual within those limits, devoting themselves to public interests and especially to what was called the glory of the State. The legislator, seeking by his institutions to exalt his country above its rivals, and the warrior, fastening its yoke on its foes and crowning it with bloody laurels, were the great names of earlier times. Christ loved man, not masses of men; loved each and all, and not a particular country and class. The human being was dear to him for his own sake, not for the spot of earth on which he lived, not for

the language he spoke, nor for his rank in life, but for his humanity, for his spiritual nature, for the image of God in which he was made. Nothing outward in human condition engrossed the notice, or narrowed, the sympathies of Jesus. He looked to the human soul. That he loved. That divine spark he desired to cherish, no matter where it dwelt, no matter how it was dimmed. He loved man for his own sake, and all men without exclusion or exception. His ministry was not confined to a church, a chosen congregation. On the mount he opened his mouth and spake to the promiscuous multitude. From the bosom of the lake he delivered his parables to the throng which lined its shores. His church was nature, the unconfined air and earth: and his truths, like the blessed influences of nature's sunshine and rain, fell on each and all. He lived in the highway, the street, the places of concourse, and welcomed the eager crowds which gathered round him from every sphere and rank of life. Nor was it to crowds that his sympathy was confined. He did not need a multitude to excite him. The humblest individual drew his regards. He took the little child into his arms, and blessed it: he heard the beggar crying to him by the wayside where he sat for alms: and in the anguish of death, he administered consolation to a malefactor expiring at his side. In this shone forth the divine wisdom as well as love of Jesus, that he understood the worth of a human being. So truly did he comprehend it, that, as I think, he would have counted himself repaid for all his teachings and mighty works, for all his toils and sufferings, and bitter death, by the redemption of a single soul. His love to every human being surpassed that of a parent to an only

child. Jesus was great in all things, but in nothing greater than in his comprehension of the worth of a human spirit. Before his time no one dreamed of it. The many had been sacrificed to the few. The mass of men had been trodden under foot. History had been but a record of struggles and institutions, which breathed nothing so strongly as contempt of the human race.

Jesus was the first philanthropist. He brought with him a new era, the era of philanthropy; and from his time a new spirit has moved over the troubled waters of society, and will move until it has brought order and beauty out of darkness and confusion. The men, whom he trained and into whom he had poured most largely his own spirit, were signs, proofs, that a new kingdom had come. They consecrated themselves to a work at that time without precedent, wholly original, such as had not entered human thought. They left home, possessions, country, went abroad into strange lands, and not only put life in peril, but laid it down, to spread the truth which they had received from their Lord, to make the true God, even the Father, known to his blinded children, to make the Savior known to the sinner, to make life and immortality known to the dying, to give a new impulse to the human soul. We read of the mission of the apostles as if it were a thing of course. The thought perhaps never comes to us, that they entered on a sphere of action until that time wholly unexplored; that not a track had previously marked their path; that the great conception, which inspired them, of converting a world, had never dawned on the sublimest intellect; that the spiritual love for every human being, which carried them over oceans and through deserts, amid scourgings

and fastings and imprisonments and death, was a new light from heaven breaking out on earth, a new revelation of the divinity in human nature. Then it was, that man began to yearn for man with a Godlike love. Then a new voice was heard on earth, the voice of prayer for the recovery, pardon, happiness of a world. It was most strange, it was a miracle more worthy of admiration than the raising of the dead, that from Judea, the most exclusive, narrow country under heaven, which hated and scorned all other nations, and shrunk from their touch as pollution, should go forth men to proclaim the doctrine of human brotherhood, to give to every human being, however fallen or despised, assurances of God's infinite love, to break down the barriers of nation and rank, to pour out their blood like water in the work of diffusing the spirit of universal love. Thus mightily did the character of Jesus act on the spirits of the men with whom he had lived. Since that time the civilized world has been overwhelmed by floods of barbarians, and ages of darkness have passed. But some rays of this divine light break on us through the thickest darkness. The new impulse given to Christianity was never wholly spent. The rude sculpture of the dark ages represented Jesus hanging from his cross; and however this image was abused to purposes of superstition, it still spoke to men of a philanthropy stronger than death, which felt and suffered for every human being; and a softening, humanizing virtue went from it which even the barbarian could not wholly resist. In our own times the character of Jesus is exerting more conspicuously its true and glorious power. We have indeed little cause for boasting. The great features of society are still hard and selfish. The worth of a human

being is a mystery still hid from an immense majority, and the most enlightened among us have not looked beneath the surface of this great truth. Still there is at this moment an interest in human nature, a sympathy with human suffering, a sensibility to the abuses and evils which deform society, a faith in man's capacity of progress, a desire of human progress, a desire to carry to every human being the means of rising to a better condition and a higher virtue, such as has never been witnessed before. Amidst the mercenariness which would degrade men into tools, and the ambition which would tread them down in its march toward power, there is still a respect for man as man, a recognition of his rights, a thirst for his elevation, which is the surest proof of a higher comprehension of Jesus Christ, and the surest augury of a happier state of human affairs. Humanity and justice are crying out in more and more piercing tones for the suffering, the enslaved, the ignorant, the poor, the prisoner, the orphan, the long-neglected seaman, the benighted heathen. I do not refer merely to new institutions for humanity, for these are not the most unambiguous proofs of progress. We see in the common consciousness of society, in the general feelings of individuals, traces of a more generous recognition of what man owes to man. The glare of outward distinction is somewhat dimmed. The prejudices of caste and rank are abated. A man is seen to be worth more than his wardrobe or his title. It begins to be understood that a Christian is to be a philanthropist, and that in truth, the essence of Christianity is a spirit of martyrdom in the cause of mankind.

This subject has been brought to my mind at the present moment, by an event in this vicinity, which has drawn little attention, but which I could not, without self-reproach, suffer to pass unnoticed. Within a few days, a great and good man, a singular example of the philanthropy which Jesus Christ came to breathe into the world, has been taken away; and as it was my happiness to know him more intimately than most among us, I feel as if I were called to bear a testimony to his rare goodness, and to hold up his example as a manifestation of what Christianity can accomplish in the human mind. I refer to the Rev. Noah Worcester, who has been justly called the Apostle of Peace, who finished his course at Brighton during the last week. His great age, for he was almost eighty, and the long, and entire seclusion to which debility had compelled him, have probably made his name a strange one to some who hear me. In truth, it is common in the present age, for eminent men to be forgotten during their lives, if their lives are much prolonged. Society is now a quick-shifting pageant. New actors hurry the old ones from the stage. The former stability of things is strikingly impaired. The authority which gathered round the aged, has declined. The young seize impatiently the prizes of life. The hurried, bustling, tumultuous, feverish Present, swallows up men's thoughts, so that he who retires from active pursuits, is as little known to the rising generation as if he were dead. It is not wonderful then, that Dr. Worcester was so far forgotten by his contemporaries. But the future will redress the wrongs of the present; and in the progress of civilization, history will guard more and more sacredly the memories of men, who have advanced before

their age, and devoted themselves to great, but neglected interests of humanity.

Dr. Worcester's efforts in relation to war, or in the cause of peace, made him eminently a public man and constitute his chief claim to public consideration; and these were not founded on accidental circumstances or foreign influences, but wholly on the strong and peculiar tendencies of his mind. He was distinguished above all whom I have known by his comprehension and deep feeling of the spirit of Christianity, by the sympathy with which he seized on the character of Jesus Christ as a manifestation of Perfect Love, by the honor in which he held the mild, humble, forgiving, disinterested virtues of our religion. This distinguishing trait of his mind was embodied and brought out in his whole life and conduct. He especially expressed it in his labors for the promotion of Universal Peace on the earth. He was struck, as no other man within my acquaintance has been, with the monstrous incongruity between the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of Christian communities, between Christ's teaching of peace, mercy, forgiveness, and the wars which divide and desolate the church and the world. Every man has particular impressions which rule over and give a hue to his mind. Every man is struck by some evils rather than others. The excellent individual of whom I speak was shocked, heart-smitten, by nothing so much, as by seeing, that man hates man, that man destroys his brother, that man has drenched the earth with his brother's blood, that man in his insanity has crowned the murderer of his race with the highest honors; and, still worse, that Christian hates Christian, that church wars against church, that differences of forms

and opinions array against each other those whom Christ died to join together in closest brotherhood, and that Christian zeal is spent in building up sects, rather than in spreading the spirit of Christ and enlarging and binding together the universal church. The great evil on which his mind and heart fixed was War, Discord, Intolerance, the substitution of force for Reason and Love. To spread peace on earth became the object of his life. Under this impulse he gave birth and impulse to Peace Societies. This new movement is to be traced to him above all other men, and his name, I doubt not, will be handed down to future time with increasing veneration as the 'Friend of Peace,' as having given new force to the principles which are gradually to abate the horrors and ultimately extinguish the spirit of war.

The history of the good man, as far as I have learned it, is singularly instructive and encouraging. He was self-taught, self-formed. He was born in narrow circumstances, and to the age of twenty-one was a laborious farmer, not only deprived of a collegiate education, but of the advantages which may be enjoyed in a more prosperous family. An early marriage brought on him the cares of a growing family. Still he found or rather made time for sufficient improvements to introduce him into the ministry before his thirtieth year. He was first settled in a parish too poor to give him even a scanty support; and he was compelled to take a farm on which he toiled by day, whilst in the evening he was often obliged to use a mechanical art for the benefit of his family. He made their shoes, an occupation of which Coleridge has somewhere remarked, that it has been followed by a greater number of eminent men than any other trade.

By the side of his work-bench he kept ink and paper, that he might write down the interesting thoughts, which he traced out or which rushed on him amidst his humble labors. I take pleasure in stating this part of his history. The prejudice against manual labor as inconsistent with personal dignity is one of the most irrational and pernicious, especially in a free country. It shows how little we comprehend the spirit of our institutions, and how deeply we are tainted with the narrow maxims of the old aristocracies of Europe. Here was a man, uniting great intellectual improvement with refinement of manners, who had been trained under unusual severity of toil. This country has lost much physical and moral strength, and its prosperity is at this moment depressed, by the common propensity to forsake the plough for less manly pursuits, which are thought however to promise greater dignity as well as ease.

His first book was a series of letters to a Baptist minister, and in this he gave promise of the direction which the efforts of his life were to assume. The great object of these letters, was not to settle the controversies about baptism, about the mode of administering it whether by immersion or sprinkling, or about the proper subjects of it whether children or adults alone. His aim was, to show that these were inferior questions, that differences about these ought not to divide Christians, that the 'close communion' as it is called of the Baptists was inconsistent with the liberal spirit of Christianity, and that this obstruction to Christian unity ought to be removed.

His next publication was what brought him into notice and gave him an important place in our theological history. It was a publication on the Trinity, and what is

worthy of remark, it preceded the animated controversy on that point which a few years after agitated this city and commonwealth. The mind of Dr. Worcester was turned to this topic not by foreign impulses but by its own workings. He had been brought up in the strictest sect, that is, as a Calvinist. His first doubts as to the Trinity arose from the confusion, the perplexity, into which his mind was thrown by this doctrine in his acts of devotion. To worship three persons as one and the same God, as one and the same being, seemed to him difficult if not impossible. He accordingly resolved to read and examine the Scriptures from beginning to end, for the purpose of ascertaining the true doctrine respecting God and the true rank of Jesus Christ. The views at which he arrived were so different from what prevailed around him, and some of them so peculiar, that he communicated them to the public under the rather quaint title of 'Bible News relating to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' His great aim was to prove, that the Supreme God was one person, even the Father, and that Jesus Christ was not the Supreme God but his Son in a strict and peculiar sense. This idea of 'the peculiar and natural sonship' of Christ, by which he meant that Jesus was derived from the very substance of the Father, had taken a strong hold on his mind, and he insisted on it with as much confidence as was consistent with his deep sense of fallibility. But, as might be expected in so wise and spiritual a man, it faded more and more from his mind, in proportion as he became acquainted with and assimilated to the true glory of his Master. In one of his unpublished manuscripts, he gives an account of his change of view in this particular, and, without disclaim-

ing expressly the doctrine which had formerly seemed so precious, he informs us that it had lost its importance in his sight. The Moral, Spiritual dignity of Christ, had risen on his mind in such splendor as to dim his old idea of 'natural sonship.' In one place he affirms, 'I do not recollect an instance [in the scriptures] in which Christ is spoken of as loved, honored, or praised on any other ground than his Moral dignity.' This moral greatness he declares to be the highest with which Jesus was clothed, and expresses his conviction, 'that the controversies of Christians about his natural dignity, had tended very little to the honor of their Master, or to their own advantage.' The manuscript to which I refer was written after his seventieth year, and is very illustrative of his character. It shows, that his love of truth was stronger than the tenacity with which age commonly clings to old ideas. It shows him superior to the theory, which more than any other he had considered his own, and which had been the fruit of very laborious study. It shows how strongly he felt, that Progress was the law and end of his being, and how he continued to make progress to the last hour. The work called 'Bible News' drew much attention, and converted not a few to the doctrine of the proper unity of God. Its calm, benignant spirit had no small influence in disarming prejudice and unkindness. He found however that his defection from his original faith had exposed him to much suspicion and reproach; and he became at length so painfully impressed with the intolerance which his work had excited, that he published another shorter work called 'Letters to Trinitarians,' a work breathing the very spirit of Jesus, and intended to teach, that diversities of opinion, on subjects the most mysteri-

ous and perplexing, ought not to sever friends, to dissolve the Christian tie, to divide the church, to fasten on the dissenter from the common faith the charge of heresy, to array the disciples of the Prince of Peace in hostile bands. These works obtained such favor, that he was solicited to leave the obscure town in which he ministered, and to take charge, in this place, of a periodical called at first the Christian Disciple, and now better known as the Christian Examiner. At that time, (about twenty-five years ago,) I first saw him. Long and severe toil, and a most painful disease, had left their traces on his once athletic frame; but his countenance beamed with a benignity which at once attracted confidence and affection. For several years he consulted me habitually in the conduct of the work which he edited. I recollect with admiration the gentleness, humility, and sweetness of temper, with which he endured freedoms, corrections, retrenchments, some of which I feel now to have been unwarranted, and which no other man would so kindly have borne. This work was commenced very much for doctrinal discussions; but his spirit could not brook such limitations, and he used its pages more and more for the dissemination of his principles of philanthropy and peace. At length he gave these principles to the world, in a form which did much to decide his future career. He published a pamphlet called 'A Solemn Review of the Custom of War.' It bore no name, and appeared without recommendation, but it immediately seized on attention. It was read by multitudes in this country, then published in England, and translated, as I have heard, into several languages of Europe. Such was the impression made by this work, that a new associa-

tion, called the Peace Society of Massachusetts, was instituted in this place. I well recollect the day of its formation in yonder house, then the parsonage of this parish, and if there was a happy man that day on earth, it was the founder of this institution. This society gave birth to all the kindred ones in this country, and its influence was felt abroad. Dr. Worcester assumed the charge of its periodical, and devoted himself for years to this cause, with unabating faith and zeal; and it may be doubted, whether any man, who ever lived, contributed more than he, to spread just sentiments on the subject of War, and to hasten the era of universal peace. He began his efforts in the darkest day, when the whole civilized world was shaken by conflict, and threatened with military despotism. He lived to see more than twenty years of general peace, and to see through these years, a multiplication of national ties, an extension of commercial communications, an establishment of new connections between Christians and learned men through the world, and a growing reciprocity of friendly and beneficent influence among different states, all giving aid to the principles of peace, and encouraging hopes which a century ago would have been deemed insane.

The abolition of war, to which this good man devoted himself, is no longer to be set down as a creation of fancy, a dream of enthusiastic philanthropy. War rests on opinion, and opinion is more and more withdrawing its support. War rests on contempt of human nature, on the long, mournful habit of regarding the mass of human beings as machines, or as animals having no higher use than to be shot at and murdered, for the glory of a chief, for the seating of this or that family on a throne, for the

petty interests or selfish rivalries which have inflamed states to conflict. Let the worth of a human being be felt; let the mass of a people be elevated; let it be understood that a man was made to enjoy unalienable right, to improve lofty powers, to secure a vast happiness; and a main pillar of war will fall. And is it not plain that these views are taking place of the contempt in which man has so long been held? War finds another support in the prejudices and partialities of a narrow patriotism. Let the great Christian principle of human brotherhood be comprehended, let the Christian spirit of universal love gain ground, and just so fast the custom of war, so long the pride of men, will become their abhorrence and execration. It is encouraging to see how outward events are concurring with the influences of Christianity in promoting peace, how an exclusive nationality is yielding to growing intercourse, how different nations by mutual visits, by the interchange of thoughts and products, by studying one another's language and literature, by union of efforts in the cause of religion and humanity, are growing up to the consciousness of belonging to one great family. Every rail road connecting distant regions, may be regarded as accomplishing a ministry of peace. Every year which passes without war, by interweaving more various ties of interest and friendship, is a pledge of coming years of peace. The prophetic faith, with which Dr. Worcester, in the midst of universal war, looked forward to a happier era, and which was smiled at as enthusiasm or credulity, has already received a sanction beyond his fondest hopes by the wonderful progress of human affairs.

On the subject of War, Dr. Worcester adopted opin-

ions which are thought by some to be extreme. He interpreted literally the precept, Resist not evil; and he believed that nations as well as individuals would find safety as well as 'fulfil righteousness' in yielding it literal obedience. One of the most striking traits of his character, was his confidence in the power of love, I might say, in its omnipotence. He believed, that the surest way to subdue a foe, was to become his friend; that a true benevolence was a surer defence than swords, or artillery, or walls of adamant. He believed, that no mightier man ever trod the soil of America than William Penn, when entering the wilderness unarmed, and stretching out to the savage a hand which refused all earthly weapons, in token of brotherhood and peace. There was something grand in the calm confidence, with which he expressed his conviction of the superiority of moral to physical force. Armies, fiery passions, quick resentments, and the spirit of vengeance miscalled honor, seemed to him weak, low instruments, inviting, and often hastening the ruin which they are used to avert. Many will think him in error; but if so, it was a grand thought which led him astray.

At the age of seventy, he felt as if he had discharged his mission as a preacher of peace, and resigned his office as Secretary to the Society, to which he had given the strength of many years. He did not, however, retire to unfruitful repose. Bodily infirmity had increased, so that he was very much confined to his house; but he returned with zeal to the studies of his early life, and produced two theological works, one on the atonement, the other on human depravity or the moral state of man by nature, which I regard as among the most useful

books on these long agitated subjects. These writings, particularly the last, have failed of the popularity which they merit, in consequence of a defect of style, which may be traced to his defective education, and which naturally increased with years. I refer to his diffuseness, to his inability to condense his thoughts. His writings, however, are not wanting in merits of style. They are simple and clear. They abound to a remarkable degree in ingenious illustration, and they have often the charm which original thinking always gives to composition. He was truly an original writer, not in the sense of making great discoveries, but in the sense of writing from his own mind, and not from books, or tradition. What he wrote, had perhaps been written before; but in consequence of his limited reading, it was new to himself, and came to him with the freshness of discovery. Sometimes great thoughts flashed on his mind, as if they had been inspirations; and in writing his last book, he seems to have felt as if some extraordinary light had been imparted from above. After his seventy-fifth year he ceased to write books, but his mind lost nothing of its activity. He was so enfeebled by a distressing disease, that he could converse but for a few moments at a time; yet he entered into all the great movements of the age, with an interest distinguished from the fervor of youth, only by its mildness and its serene trust. The attempts made, in some of our cities, to propagate atheistical principles, gave him much concern, and he applied himself to fresh inquiries into the proofs of the existence and perfections of God, hoping to turn his labors to the account of his erring fellow-creatures. With this view, he entered on the study of nature as a glorious testimony to

its almighty author. I shall never forget the delight which illumined his countenance a short time ago, as he told me, that he had just been reading the history of the coral, the insect which raises islands in the sea. 'How wonderfully,' he exclaimed, 'is God's providence revealed in these little creatures.' The last subject to which he devoted his thoughts, was slavery. His mild spirit could never reconcile itself to the methods in which this evil is often assailed; but the greatness of the evil he deeply felt, and he left several essays on this as on the preceding subject, which, if they shall be found unfit for publication, will still bear witness to the intense, unfaltering interest with which he bound himself to the cause of mankind.

I have thus given a sketch of the history of a good man who lived and died the lover of his kind and the admiration of his friends. Two views of him particularly impressed me. The first was the unity, the harmony of his character. He had no jarring elements. His whole nature had been blended and melted into one strong, serene love. His mission was to preach peace, and he preached it not on set occasions, or by separate efforts, but in his whole life. It breathed in his tones. It beamed from his venerable countenance. He carried it, where it is least apt to be found, into the religious controversies, which raged around him with great vehemence, but which never excited him to a word of anger or intolerance. All my impressions of him are harmonious. I recollect no discord in his beautiful life; and this serenity was not the result of torpidness or tameness; for his whole life was a conflict with what he thought error. He made no compromise with the world, and yet he loved

it as deeply and constantly as if it had responded in shouts to all his views and feelings.

The next great impression which I received from him, was that of the sufficiency of the mind to its own happiness, or of its independence on outward things. He was for years debilitated and often a great sufferer; and his circumstances were very narrow, compelling him to so strict an economy, that he was sometimes represented, though falsely, as wanting the common comforts of life. In this tried and narrow condition, he was among the most contented of men. He spoke of his old age as among the happiest portions if not the very happiest in his life. In conversation his religion manifested itself in gratitude more frequently than in any other form. When I have visited him in his last years, and looked on his serene countenance, and heard his cheerful voice, and seen the youthful earnestness with which he was reading a variety of books, and studying the great interests of humanity, I have felt how little of this outward world is needed to our happiness. I have felt the greatness of the human spirit, which could create to itself such joy from its own resources. I have felt the folly, the insanity of that prevailing worldliness, which in accumulating outward good, neglects the imperishable soul. On leaving his house and turning my face toward the city, I have said to myself, how much richer is this poor man than the richest who dwell yonder. I have been ashamed of my own dependance on outward good. I am always happy to express my obligations to the benefactors of my mind; and I owe it to Dr. Worcester to say, that my acquaintance with him gave me clearer comprehension of the spirit of Christ, and of the dignity of a man.

And he has gone to his reward. He has gone to that world of which he carried in his own breast so rich an earnest and pledge, to a world of Peace. He has gone to Jesus Christ, whose spirit he so deeply comprehended and so freely imbibed, and to God, whose universal, all-suffering, all-embracing love he adored and in a humble measure made manifest in his own life. But he is not wholly gone; not gone in heart, for I am sure that a better world has heightened, not extinguished, his affection for his race; and not gone in influence, for his thoughts remain in his works, and his memory is laid up as a sacred treasure in many minds. A spirit so beautiful ought to multiply itself in those to whom it is made known. May we all be incited by it to a more grateful, cheerful love to God, and serener, gentler, nobler love of our fellow-creatures.

NOTE.

FROM A LETTER OF ONE OF DR. WORCESTER'S CHILDREN.

"My father was blessed with pious ancestors. His grandfather was reputed a devoted minister. Both his grand-parents took a deep interest in his welfare, and, with his pious parents, no doubt, offered fervent supplication that he might early devote himself to the service of God. He often remarked, that he could not remember, when he had not a love for divine things. A few days previous to his death, he mentioned a circumstance which deeply interested me. He said, that, in the absence of his father, his mother and grandmother were in the habit of conducting family worship, until he arrived to the age of twelve. From that period, he said, that he, being the oldest child, was called upon to perform this service. The sacredness, which, from early life, he attached to the observance of this delightful duty, may thus be accounted for. Even when there were strong indications of mental aberration, as there often were in the lethargic turns with which he was afflicted for several years previous to his death, he would call the family together at the customary hour, and address the throne of grace in an affectionate and collected manner.

"He had no advantages for an education, excepting what the common public schools of that day afforded. He was industrious, and very economical of time, and having a taint for knowledge, improved all his moments to some good purpose. At the age of twenty-one he was married, and removed to Thornton, N. H. At what time he made a profession of religion, I cannot tell; but the deep interest which he took in the spiritual welfare of the people, and the affection manifested on their part, suggested to their aged minister the idea, that his own services could be spared, and that my father should prepare himself to be his successor. With the care of a family, dependent entirely upon his labor for support, and with few books except his Bible, he commenced. The minister above alluded to, I think, afforded him such assistance as he was able; but it was very evident, that the Great Teacher was his principal instructor, as he possessed much of his spirit.

"He was in the habit of speaking of his death with perfect composure for many years, and calculated to have all his affairs arranged and settled daily, and appeared to be constantly waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom. If there was one grace, which shone more particularly in his character than another, I think it was gratitude; and surely no family have greater reason for gratitude than we have had. The debt is great to earthly benefactors, but how immense our obligations to our Divine benefactor. During my dear father's last illness, when he was relieved from distress, or after refreshing sleep, he would exclaim, 'Give God the praise; help me to praise him.' For the last few weeks of his life, he was too weak to converse much. He appeared to take great delight in hearing the Scriptures read, and in uniting with Christians in prayer. His precious spirit returned to God who gave it, twenty minutes past nine in the evening of October 31, 1837. When the clock struck seven he inquired the time, and whether it was seven in the morning or evening. On being told, he expressed his surprise that it was no later, and said, 'I hope that I shall be in Heaven before seven in the morning.' A friend replied, 'I trust you will.' He was asked if he should like to have prayer again. He answered very cheerfully, and with a smile upon his countenance turned to a friend present, and said, 'O yes, do.' A little before nine he requested that the death of Christ might be read to him. He was asked where. He replied in Matthew. A turn of distress prevented this request being complied with for some minutes, after which he was asked if he could now listen: he said 'Yes,' and appeared to attend with interest. This was his last request, and these were his last words."

"The venerable Dr. Worcester, (as stated in a letter from the Rev. Mr. Austin of Brighton,) lived to see the fourth generation, and died aged 79. A few days before his death, he told me, that his religious views were unchanged, and that he derived from them peculiar comfort; and to the Rev. Mr. Lamson, who also prayed with him more than once, he said, 'Pray that I may have no will of my own.'"

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THE

NATURE, REALITY, AND POWER

OF

CHRISTIAN FAITH.

By HENRY WARE, Jr. D. D.

PRINTED FOR THE

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THE

NATURE, REALITY, AND POWER

OF

CHRISTIAN FAITH.

The distinction between Faith and Sight, between what we believe and what we know, is a very familiar one; and its nature is sufficiently obvious. It refers not so much to the *certainty* of an opinion or fact, as to the *evidence* on which it rests. One may be equally certain of that which he believes, as of that which he knows; but he has arrived at his confidence by a different evidence. I am as certain that there is a mosque at Constantinople, as that there is a church here; but in the one case it is the certainty of Knowledge, in the other, the certainty of Faith. Knowledge is derived from consciousness, from sensation, from demonstration; Faith springs from testimony, and from analogy. *I know*, because I am conscious, because I see, feel, observe, follow the reasonings of science. *I believe*, because I am told by witnesses, and because analogy renders it probable. But I am just as certain in the one case, as in the other. My faith, that Columbus lived and visited America, has no

more doubt in it, than my consciousness that I live myself. My assurance that the huge bones of the mammoth belonged to a creature having lungs and muscles; and that the splendid ruins of Palmyra were built and once inhabited by men, is as strong from analogy, as my confidence in the forty-seventh proposition of Euclid, from demonstration. So that when the Christian believer speaks of his "Faith," he uses a term which expresses not one whit less confidence, than when he speaks of what he he "knows." Indeed, in religious affairs, these are for the most part convertible terms, religious *knowledge*, with scarcely an exception beyond what relates to a man's private experience, is precisely religious *faith*: — it is a knowledge, founded, like men's knowledge of distant countries and past ages, on testimony; and he walks by it just as confidently as if he walked by sight.

This being so, it is obvious that the word Faith, as applied to matters of religion, has precisely the same meaning which it has when applied to other subjects or affairs; in other words, it is the same exercise of the mind. The Christian believes by the same constitution and process of mind, by which the merchant believes that there are cities which he has never seen, and the scholar credits the tale of an historian who died two thousand years ago. It belongs to the human mind to believe on evidence; and on sufficient evidence, to believe with the confidence of knowledge. It is all the same, so far, whether the subject be sacred or profane, this world or the next; — the state and process of the human mind is in each case the same.

Therefore—the New Testament does the most natural thing in the world, the most reasonable, the most inevita-

ble thing, when it builds up the Christian Religion on Faith, and declares it essential to salvation. It could not be otherwise. In the nature of things, there can be no religion, excepting through Faith. No man can come to God, except he *believe* that He is. No doctrine can be received as from God, except the testimony which establishes it be believed. No teacher can be followed, no futurity sought, no retributions expected, except through Faith. The beginning, progress, and end of the soul's existence on earth is, and must be, a pure process of faith. For it has to do with the past, the absent, the distant, the future, the invisible; and there is no possible way for man to do with either, except through Faith. Try the experiment, and determine for yourself. What knowledge have you of things past, distant, absent, future, invisible, excepting what you have derived through Faith? Wherefore Christianity, rightly, necessarily, and reasonably, founds itself on Faith—demands Faith of those who receive it—and insists that, without Faith, all is vain. It would be merely preposterous, it would be a bare absurdity, to suppose that one may worship an invisible God, may receive the advantages of Christ's teaching and mediation, may have the influences, consolations, and hopes of a spiritual and everlasting life, without believing in it all. The obligation of Faith is, therefore, absolute and incontestable; and it becomes a matter of unspeakable moment to us to ascertain aright what it is, that we may truly cherish and exercise it.

Let us, therefore, cursorily glance at its Nature, Reality, and Power.

The Nature of Faith has been in a good degree set forth in the remarks already made. We must add, how-

ever, to what has been said, that its characteristics vary with the point of view from which it is regarded. The fundamental idea is *belief;* but other ideas pertain to it; and in order to the full development of the principle, it will be necessary to arrange and classify these ideas. We may thus distribute them into four classes.

First,— Faith is a principle of the *Understanding.* It is the rational assent to evidence. The understanding listens to testimony, weighs probabilities, compares arguments, and decides to believe or disbelieve, according to the result. And it cannot, strictly speaking, decide contrary to the strength of evidence, or rather, to its own apprehension of the strength of evidence. A man cannot refuse to believe what seems to him proved to be true, nor can he hold as true what he thinks proved to be false. Hence it is plain, that in Faith, as a principle of the understanding, there is no moral quality. It is neither virtuous nor vicious, neither blamable nor praiseworthy, to assent to what passes before one's eyes, and what he cannot disbelieve if he tries. For which reason Historical Faith, as it is called—that is, a mere acknowledgment that the gospel history is true, and that Christ is the Saviour of the world—is no where spoken of as having any value, is not that which the Scriptures applaud. Thomas declared that he would not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, unless he should see and touch him. He saw and touched, and then was not faithless, but believing. Did his master praise that faith?—Not at all; but rather the contrary. "Because thou hast SEEN, therefore thou hast believed? Blessed are they who have NOT seen, and yet have believed."

In the second place—Faith is a principle of the *Affec-*

tions. The heart gives itself up to that which the Understanding assents to, takes an interest in it, becomes attached to it, trusts it. Here Faith becomes a *moral* quality; — since a man is virtuous or vicious, according as he devotes his heart to good or evil objects. Thus, in the case of Thomas — though there was no virtue in his believing that Christ was risen, because he saw and touched him; yet, when he gave his heart to him, and obediently followed him as his Master and Lord, he exhibited qualities that were praiseworthy. Thus it is one element of a true Faith, that it subjects the affections to its sway — so that they love, desire, hate, precisely what religion shows them to be lovely, desirable, hateful; they approve and conform to the proper standard of Christ. Hence the expression of Paul; "With *the Heart* man believes unto righteousness."

Then, thirdly — Faith is a principle of the *Will.* One may assent to a truth, may even love it, and yet have no conformity of *will* to it; may not resolutely choose to devote himself to it and follow it; may retain in his own mind a depraved preference for the opposite; may applaud and love the good, and yet pursue the evil. Now, true Christian Faith takes hold on the Will, causes religion to be its guide, its umpire, its supreme director, so that the man of Faith submits to it his inclinations and preferences, and habitually chooses the will of God.

And, fourthly — it is a principle of *Action.* It does not barely gain the consent of the Understanding, kindle the Affections, give direction to the Will; it *acts* in the life; it is the perpetual impulse and excitement of the conduct — controlling the indulgence of appetite and passion, dictating the favorite pursuit, and enforcing the law

of universal uprightness, purity, and charity. So that the man not only *has* his convictions and preferences, but he carries them out in his life, exhibits them in his conduct; in a word, *walks* by them.

All this is comprised in Faith — the subjection of the Understanding, the Affections, the Will, and the Life. When concerned with the Understanding, it is simple *belief;* when wrought into the Affections, it takes the name and character of *trust;* and when, beyond this, it bends the Will and forms the Active character, it shows itself to be no less than *the religious principle;* the great all-powerful Principle, by which man is moulded into a conformity with his Creator, and made such as Christ came to fashion him. It is The Religious Principle; and for that reason is insisted on, throughout the New Testament, in the most frequent, most various, most authoritative terms, as the source of human strength, and the indispensable condition of acceptance and salvation.

Such is Christian Faith; — and by this we are to walk, says Paul. We are to direct by it our path through the world. We are to give it the rule over our spirits and our lives. It is to be the vigilant overseer, the sovereign dictator, to watch over and control us in our way, with a uniform, uninterrupted, ever wakeful influence. It is to be in our moral system, what the eternal principle of gravitation is in the material universe — the law which maintains all in its right place and relative order, and leads all to the rightful result. It is to become a sort of instinct within us, conscious of the presence of God, trustful of his providence, satisfied with all that occurs, sensitive to hints of truth, prompt to suggestions of right, and thus imparting to us a spirit of quiet serenity and steadfast

rectitude. It is not so much a separate act of the mind, or an insulated grace of the character, one act of a long catalogue of virtues, as it is the origin and main-spring of all the virtues, the spirit that must animate all, the essence that must be infused into all, and without which, none of them have that immortal principle of life which will prolong their existence beyond the present scene.

We see, then, what is the nature of Faith. We were next to explain *its reality and power*. And here the single idea to be enforced, is that with which I began; namely, that so far as regards certainty, our Faith should be to us the same thing as Knowledge, and as real a thing as sense.

The great practical difficulty with men in regard to religion is, that they fancy they do not *know* these things to be true; if, they pretend, these truths were as real as this visible world, they should find it easy to do their religious duty. This is the plea with which they quiet themselves in a life of indifference and neglect. Let it be understood, therefore, as the simple fact, that they are in themselves as real as the tangible objects of sense, and as certain to us as if we came to a knowledge of them in the same way. Nay, I may go further, and assert, that we do actually know them in the same way and by as strong evidence, as we know most of those things of sense, on which we stake our happiness with the greatest confidence.

This is the great practical remark belonging to our subject; and it needs less an argument to prove it true, than an illustration to render it obvious to our apprehension. Let us attempt such an illustration.

We may begin it by observing, that the disposition in man to trust others, to rely on something exterior to him-

self, is a native, inherent, instinctive disposition. It is as much a part of the human constitution, as the appetite for food. It is almost as early developed as that appetite. The infant leans on its mother, trusts her kindness and protection, feels confidence in her fidelity, love and truth. Ask any mother, and she will tell you, that the little one has hardly found its way to the sweet fountain of her bosom, before it makes manifest how happy it feels in trusting itself to her. As months proceed, this is more and more evident. The entire filial relation, the whole connexion, so beautifully arranged by God, between parent and child; the course and process of education, in which the inexperienced pupil submits himself to the guidance of his preceptor; what are these but instances of Faith? the instinctive reliance of the weak on the strong, of the young on the old? Follow the child up to manhood, it is still the same. Men are perpetually cast into situations in which they are wholly inadequate to provide for their own well-being, and they are compelled to surrender themselves to the advice and direction of others; and what is this but the exercise of Faith? Indeed, man's condition, as a social being, depends upon this principle. Without it, society could not exist; even families could not hold together. The bond of union is mutual confidence. So true is this, that men are always unhappy, when they have none in whom to confide. The most miserable wretch upon earth, is he who feels that he can trust no one, and who moves about among men, without knowing one on whom he can lean, and in whose friendship he may rely. So essentially does this disposition belong to human nature.

Now, Religion takes up this native disposition, this in-

stinct, of the human soul, and uses it for the purpose of binding men to their highest relation, and securing for them their highest good. If the greatest advantages of the present life are to be gained by this natural Faith in the persons around us, and in the constitution of things, in the midst of which we are placed; so, religion asserts, the blessings of man's superior life and perfect happiness are to be secured by a similar confidence in the Lord of all, and the ordinances relating to His eternal Kingdom. The spirit of both worlds is the spirit of absolute unquestioning trust. We trust our sustenance, our comforts, our property, our lives, every day, to our fellow men, just as truly and as fully as we are required in religious matters to give ourselves up by faith to God and Christ. Faith is the spring of all action; and as striking examples of "walking by faith" may be found in the conduct of temporal as of spiritual affairs. The examples abound; and from out of the multitude which might be adduced, let us select one — the familiar case of a ship at sea. What is it, but one grand illustration of the reality and power of this native principle? You place yourself as passenger on board a ship, bound to another continent. You have never before been at sea; you know nothing of the principles of navigation; the whole process of managing the vast machine, and of ascertaining the course you are to run, is a mystery to you; you never before have seen the master, or had any acquaintance with the men. Yet you trust yourself, ignorant and a stranger — you trust yourself without hesitation to that tossing barque, on the threatening waters; and you eat and sleep as quietly as if you had been familiar with them all your days. Thousands, every year, exercise this amazing faith in man and

nautical skill, with a quietude of mind that would be thought madness were it not so common.—And this is the state of mind, not of the passengers alone, but of the seamen also. They know nothing of the science by which they are led; they go by Faith in their commander; they *believe* that he knows, and they trust themselves to his orders. And the Captain himself is but the child of Faith; he is putting reliance in the soundness of his ship, which he did not build, and does not know who did build it; in the accuracy of instruments, which he did not make, and does not know who did make them; and in the exactness of tables which he did not calculate, and does not know who did calculate them. Not one of that large company, thus cut loose from the land and flying prosperously over the heart of the abyss, could be possest of any thing but terror, were it not for this confiding Faith. Take it from them, exchange it for distrust, for skepticism, for doubt — let the commander cease to believe in his tables and his instruments, and the crew and passengers in the fidelity and skill of the commander — and their composure would be turned into horror at once. Alarm and dismay would fill every soul with agony. They KNOW nothing, except that they are beyond the reach of all human aid; and this knowledge is stark despair, when their mutual Faith has departed.

Now I say, such examples prove to us, that Faith is an original instinct of the human mind, certain as knowledge, real as sense, and the constant guide of men in their ordinary affairs. Why not, then, in their spiritual affairs? Christianity demands nothing more implicit, more absolute, more extraordinary, than is demanded in the case just described. The Christian's reliance on the Savior is not more implicit, than that of

the passenger on the governor of the ship; the subjection to his will and commandment in matter of uncertainty and peril, not more absolute; and the confidence in his promise, that all shall come right at last, and the soul reach its immortal haven in peace, not a whit more extraordinary, than your astonishing reliance on the seaman's promise on the ocean. In neither case do you *know* any thing, or lean upon yourself; each is alike a matter of *Faith;* you have given up yourself without reserve, to the control of another; you guide yourself by his directions; you walk by faith in him, and not by the sight of your own eyes, or the counsel of your own mind.

In each case, too, there is the same *ground* of confidence; namely, the experience and testimony of other men. It is what you have learned from those who have tried the skill of the master and the safety of the sea, not your own acquaintance with them, which induces the confidence you repose in them. And you have equally strong and decisive testimony from those who have tried it, of the excellent power of religious truth, and the security and peace of those who follow Jesus. The testimony comes to you from a cloud of witnesses, of every age and station, of every character and fortune—thousands and tens of thousands—who have given themselves up, during this perilous voyage of their being, to the absolute guidance of the great Captain of their salvation, and have found safety joy, and peace.

Therefore, the grand plea for hesitancy and irreligion which was mentioned, is taken away. Men have no right to say, that they do not KNOW these things to be true, and do not see that they are real. This is nothing

to the purpose. They have evidence of things *not* seen; they have grounds of Faith, as sure as Knowledge; such as they act upon in all other affairs — and such as they neglect in these at their peril.

The uses to be made of the great doctrine thus expounded, are too numerous to be now adverted to. I pass them all by, to notice one only — that which the apostle Paul suggests* when he speaks to the Corinthians of the certainty of death, and explains how serenely and exultingly the believer rises above its fear; through the operation of his Faith, he is "*confident*, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord;" and not only so, but to labor in the way of duty, so as to be accepted of him, and be prepared for the judgment seat. This application of the doctrine of faith is always a seasonable one, always pertinent. For death is always near us, judgment is ever at hand. Not a day, not an hour, but shows to us our exposure to peril, and warns us by the uncertainties of earth to secure the substantial treasures of heaven. It is well, when every thing about us is uncertain, to feel that there is one thing certain; when all here is mortal, to believe that there is a world immortal. When trials, disappointment, and fears would alarm and agitate us, it is well to have that confidence in a Supreme Disposer and the glorious truths of his revelation, which shall impart composure to our spirits, and keep them in peace amid the storm.— When death approaches—with slow menaces perhaps— and shuts up the sufferer in his lonely chamber, with no prospect before him, but the dark and straight path to the

* 2 Corinthians, v, 7, 8, 9.

tomb—it is well for him, if he believe in immortality, if he have trust in the doctrines of Jesus Christ; if he can forget the present in the future, and be willing to quit the body, that he may be present with the Lord.

It is Faith which gives power; to meet, to bear, to conquer the diversified calamities of human lot. Every thing that earth has, we know, will be torn from us; Faith bestows on us more than a compensation for them all. Life is short; Faith makes it everlasting. Death is certain; Faith changes it to immortality. For, as Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. Therefore, let us walk, not by Sight, but by Faith — looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; "for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal."

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THE

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

A DISCOURSE

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY.

By WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D. D.

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DISCOURSE.

MATTHEW XIX. 13, 14.

Then were there brought unto him little children that he should put his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

THE subject of this discourse is indicated by the name of the society, at whose request I appear in this place. The Sunday School, this is now to engage our attention. I believe I can best aid it by expounding the principles on which it should rest, and by which it should be guided. I am not anxious to pronounce a eulogy on this and similar institutions. They do much good, but they are destined to do greater. They are in their infancy, and are only giving promise of the benefits they are to confer. They already enjoy patronage, and this will increase certainly, necessarily, in proportion as they shall grow in efficiency and usefulness. I wish to say something of the great principles which should preside over them, and of the modes of operation by which they

can best accomplish their end. This discourse, though especially designed for Sunday schools, is in truth equally applicable to domestic instruction. Parents who are anxious to train up their children in the paths of Christian virtue, will find in every principle and rule, now to be laid down, a guide for their own steps. How to reach, influence, enlighten, elevate the youthful mind, this is the grand topic; and who ought not to be interested in it? for who has not an interest in the young?

I propose to set before you my views under the following heads. I shall consider, first, the Principle on which such schools should be founded; next their End or great object; in the third place, What they should teach; and lastly, How they should teach. These divisions, if there were time to fill them up, would exhaust the subject. I shall satisfy myself with offering you what seem to me the most important views under each.

I. I am, first, to consider the principle on which the Sunday school should be founded. It must be founded and carried on in Faith. You must not establish it from imitation, nor set it in motion because other sects have adopted a like machinery. The Sunday school must be founded on and sustained by a strong faith in its usefulness, its worth, its importance. Faith is the spring of all energetic action. Men throw their souls into objects, only because they believe them to be attainable, and worth pursuit. You must have faith in your school; and for this end you must have faith in God; in the child whom you teach; and in the scriptures which are to be taught.

You must have faith in God; and by this I do not mean a general belief of his existence and perfection, but a

faith in him as the father and friend of the children whom you instruct, as desiring their progress more than all human friends, and as most ready to aid you in your efforts for their good. You must not feel yourselves alone. You must not think when you enter the place of teaching, that only you and your pupils are present, and that you have nothing but your own power and wisdom to rely on for success. You must feel a high presence. You must feel that the Father of these children is near you, and that he loves them with a boundless love. Do not think of God as interested only in higher orders of beings, or only in great and distinguished men. The little child is as dear to him as the hero, as the philosopher, as the angel; for in that child are the germs of an angel's powers, and God has called him into being, that he may become an angel. On this faith every Sunday school should be built, and on such a foundation it will stand firm and gather strength.

Again, you must have faith in the child whom you instruct. Believe in the greatness of its nature, and in its capacity of improvement. Do not measure its mind by its frail, slender form. In a very few years, in ten years perhaps, that child is to come forward into life, to take on him the duties of an arduous vocation, to assume serious responsibilities, and soon after he may be the head of a family, and have a voice in the government of his country. All the powers which he is to put forth in life, all the powers which are to be unfolded in his endless being, are now wrapt up within him. That mind, not you, nor I, nor an angel, can comprehend. Feel that your scholar, young as he is, is worthy of your intensest interest. Have faith in his nature, especially as fitted for religion. Do

not, as some do, look on the child as born under the curse of God, as naturally hostile to all goodness and truth. What! the child totally depraved! Can it be that such a thought ever entered the mind of a human being? especially of a parent! What! in that beauty of childhood and youth, in that open brow, that cheerful smile, do you see the brand of total corruption? Is it a little fiend who sleeps so sweetly on his mother's breast? Was it an infant demon, which Jesus took in his arms and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven?" Is the child, who, as you relate to him a story of suffering or generosity, listens with a tearful or kindling eye and a throbbing heart, is *he* a child of hell? As soon could I look on the sun, and think it the source of darkness, as on the countenance of childhood or of youth, and see total depravity written there. My friends, we should believe any doctrine sooner than this, for it tempts us to curse the day of our birth; to loathe our existence; and, by making our Creator our worst foe, and our fellow creatures hateful, it tends to rupture all the ties which bind us to God and our race. My friends, have faith in the child; not that it is virtuous and holy at birth; for virtue or holiness is not, cannot be born with us, but is a free, voluntary effort of a being who knows the distinction of right and wrong, and who, if tempted, adheres to the right; but have faith in the child as capable of knowing and loving the good and the true, as having a conscience to take the side of duty, as open to ingenuous motives for well-doing, as created for knowledge, wisdom, piety, and disinterested love.

Once more, you must have faith in Christianity as adapted to the mind of the child, as the very truth fitted

to enlighten, interest, and improve the human being in the first years of life. It is the property of our religion, that whilst it stretches beyond the grasp of the mightiest intellect, it contracts itself, so to speak, within the limits of the narrowest; that whilst it furnishes matter of inexhaustible speculation to such men as Locke and Newton, it condescends to the ignorant, and becomes the teacher of babes. Christianity at once speaks with authority in the schools of the learned, and enters the nursery to instil with gentle voice celestial wisdom into the ears of infancy. And this wonderful property of our religion is to be explained by its being founded on, and answering to, the primitive and most universal principles of human nature. It reveals God as a parent, and the first sentiment which dawns on the child is love to its parents. It enjoins not arbitrary commands, but teaches the everlasting principles of duty; and the sense of duty begins to unfold itself in the earliest stages of our being. It speaks of a future world and its inhabitants, and childhood welcomes the idea of angels, of spirits, of the vast, the wonderful, the unseen. Above all, Christianity is set forth in the life, the history, the character of Jesus; and his character, though so sublime, is still so real, so genuine, so remarkable for simplicity, and so naturally unfolded amidst the common scenes of life, that it is seized in its principal features by the child as no other greatness can be. One of the excellences of Christianity is, that it is not an abstruse theory; not wrapt up in abstract phrases, but taught us in facts, in narratives. It lives, moves, speaks, and acts before our eyes. Christian love is not taught us in cold precepts. It speaks from the cross. So immortality is not a vague promise. It breaks

forth like the morning from the tomb near Calvary. It becomes a glorious reality in the person of the rising Saviour; and his ascension opens to our view the heaven into which he enters. It is this historical form of our religion which peculiarly adapts it to childhood, to the imagination and heart, which open first in childhood. In this sense the kingdom of heaven, the religion of Christ, belongs to children. This you must feel. Believe in the fitness of our religion for those you teach. Feel that you have the very instrument for acting on the young mind, that you have the life-giving word.

II. Having considered the faith in which the Sunday school should be founded, I proceed now to consider the end, the great object, which should be proposed and kept steadily in view by its friends. To work efficiently and usefully, we must understand what we are to work for. In proportion as an end is seen dimly and unsteadily, our action will be vague, uncertain, and our energy wasted. What, then, is the end of the Sunday school? The great end is, to awaken the soul of the pupil, to bring his understanding, conscience, and heart into earnest, vigorous action on religious and moral truth, to excite and cherish in him Spiritual Life. Inward life, force, activity, this it must be our aim to call forth and build up in all our teachings of the young, especially in religious teaching. You must never forget, my friends, whether parents or Sunday school instructers, what kind of a being you are acting upon. Never forget that the child is a rational, moral, free being, and that the great end of education is to awaken rational and moral energy within him, and to lead him to the free choice of the right, to the free determination of himself to truth and duty. The child is

not a piece of wax to be moulded at another's pleasure, not a stone to be hewn passively into any shape which the caprice and interest of others may dictate; but a living, thinking being, made to act from principles in his own heart, to distinguish for himself between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, to form himself, to be in an important sense the author of his own character, the determiner of his own future being. This most important view of the child should never forsake the teacher. He is a free moral agent, and our end should be to develope such a being. He must not be treated as if he were unthinking matter. You can make a house, a ship, a statue, without its own consent. You determine the machines, which you form, wholly by your own will. The child has a will as well as yourselves. The great design of his being is, that he should act *from* himself and *on* himself. He can understand the perfection of his nature, and is created that he may accomplish it from free choice, from a sense of duty, from his own deliberate purpose.

The great end in religious instruction, whether in the Sunday school or family, is, not to stamp *our* minds irresistibly on the young, but to stir up their own; not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own; not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth; not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs; not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought; not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions, but to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may, in the course of Providence, be offered to their decision; not to impose

religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, which rest on no foundation but our own word and will, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment, so that they may discern and approve for themselves what is everlastingly right and good; not to *tell* them that God is good, but to help them to see and feel his love in all that he does within and around them; not to tell them of the dignity of Christ, but to open their inward eye to the beauty and greatness of his character, and to enkindle aspirations after a kindred virtue. In a word, the great object of all schools is to awaken intellectual and moral life in the child. Life is the great thing to be sought in a human being. Hitherto most religions and governments have been very much contrivances for extinguishing life in the human soul. Thanks to God, we live to see the dawning of a better day.

By these remarks, I do not mean that we are never to give our children a command without assigning our reasons, or an opinion without stating our proofs. They must rely on us in the first instance for much that they cannot comprehend; but I mean, that our great aim in controlling them must be to train them to control themselves, and our great aim in giving them instruction, must be to aid them in the acqusition of truth for themselves. As far as possible, religion should be adapted to their minds and hearts. We should teach religion as we do nature. We do not shut up our children from outward nature, and require them to believe in the great laws of the Creator, in the powers of light, heat, steam, gravity, on our word alone. We put them in the presence of nature. We delight to verify what we teach them of the mineral, animal, and vegetable worlds, by facts placed

under their own eyes. We encourage them to observe for themselves, and to submit to experiment what they hear. Now, all the great principles of morals and religion may be illustrated and confirmed, like the great laws of nature, by what falls under the child's own consciousness and experience. Indeed great moral and religious truths are nearer to him than the principles of natural science. The germs of them are in his soul. All the elementary ideas of God and duty and love and happiness come to him from his own spiritual powers and affections. Moral good and evil, virtue and vice, are revealed to him in his own motives of action and in the motives of those around him. Faith in God and virtue does not depend on assertion alone. Religion carries its own evidence with it more than history or science. It should rest more on the soul's own consciousness, experience, and observation. To wake up the soul to a clear, affectionate perception of the reality and truth and greatness of religion is the great end of teaching.

The great danger of Sunday schools is, that they will fall into a course of mechanical teaching, that they will give religion as a lifeless tradition, and not as a quickening reality. It is not enough to use words conveying truth. Truth must be so given that the mind will lay hold on, will recognise it as truth, and will incorporate it with itself. The most important truth may lie like a dead weight on the mind, just as the most wholesome food, for want of action in the digestive organs, becomes an oppressive load. I do not think that so much harm is done by giving error to a child, as by giving truth in a lifeless form. What is the misery of the multitudes in Christian countries? Not that they disbelieve Christianity; not

that they hold great errors, but that truth lies dead within them. They use the most sacred words without meaning. They hear of spiritual realities, awful enough to raise the dead, with utter unconcern; and one reason of this insensibility is, that teaching in early life was so mechanical, that religion was lodged in the memory and the unthinking belief, whilst the reason was not awakened, nor the conscience nor the heart moved. According to the common modes of instruction, the minds of the young become worn to great truths. By reading the Scriptures without thought or feeling, their minds are dulled to its most touching and sublime passages; and, when once a passage lies dead in the mind, its resurrection to life and power is a most difficult work. Here lies the great danger of Sunday schools. Let us never forget, that their end is to awaken life in the minds and hearts of the young.

III. I now proceed to consider what is to be taught in the Sunday schools to accomplish the great end of which I have spoken;* and this may seem soon settled. Should I ask you what is to be taught in the Sunday school, the answer would be, "The Christian religion. The institution is a Christian one, and has for its end the communication of Christian truth." I acquiesce in the answer; but the question then comes, "In what forms shall the

* In the remarks which I am to make on what is to be taught in the Sunday school, I take it for granted that this school is the first stage of a course of religious instruction, not the whole course; that it prepares for, but does not include Bible classes and other classes, in which the most difficult books of Scripture, the evidences of natural and revealed religion, and a system of moral philosophy should be taught.

religion be taught, so as to wake up the life of the child? Shall a catechism be taught?" I say, No. A catechism is a skeleton, a dead letter, a petrifaction. Wanting life, it can give none. A cold abstraction, it cannot but make religion repulsive to pupils whose age demands that truth should be embodied, set before their eyes, bound up with real life. A catechism, by being systematical, may give a certain order and method to teaching; but systems of theology are out of place in Sunday schools. They belong to the end, not the beginning, of religious teaching. Besides, they are so generally the constructions of human ingenuity rather than the living forms of divine wisdom; they give such undue prominence to doctrines which have been lifted into importance only by the accident of having been made matters of controversy; they so often sacrifice common sense, the plain dictates of reason and conscience, to the preservation of what is called consistency; they lay such fetters on teacher and learner, and prevent so much the free action of the mind and heart, that they seldom enter the Sunday school but to darken and mislead it.

The Christian religion should be learned not from catechisms and systems, but from the Scriptures, and especially from that part of the Scriptures in which it especially resides, in the histories, actions, words, sufferings, triumphs of Jesus Christ. The Gospels, the Gospels, these should be the text-book of Sunday schools. They are more adapted to the child than any other part of Scripture. They are full of life, reality, beauty, power, and in skilful hands are fitted above all writing to awaken spiritual life in old and young.

The Gospels are to be the study of the Sunday-school

teacher, and of all who teach the young: and the great object of study must be, to penetrate to the spirit of these divine writings, and above all things to comprehend the spirit, character, purpose, motives, love of Jesus Christ. He is to be the great study. In him, his religion is revealed as nowhere else. Much attention is now given, and properly given, by teachers to what may be called the letter of the Gospels, to the Geography of the country where Christ lived, to the customs to which he refers, to the state of society which surrounded him. This knowledge is of great utility. We should strive to learn the circumstances in which Jesus was placed and lived, as thoroughly as those of our own times. We should study the men among whom he lived, their opinions and passions, their hopes and expectations, the sects who hated and opposed him, the superstitions which prevailed among the learned and the multitude, and strive to see all these things as vividly as if we had lived at the very moment of Christ's ministry. But all this knowledge is to be gained not for its own sake, but as a means of bringing us near to Jesus, of letting us into the secrets of his mind, of revealing to us his spirit and character and of bringing out the full purpose and import of all that he did and said. It is only by knowing the people among whom he was born, and brought up, and lived, and died, that we can fully comprehend the originality, strength, and dignity of his character, his unborrowed, self-subsisting excellence, his miraculous love. We have very few of us a conception, how Jesus stood alone in the age in which he lived, how unsustained he was in his great work, how he found not one mind to comprehend his own, not one friend to sympathize with his great purpose, how every outward influ-

ence withstood him; and, for want of this conception, we do not regard Jesus with the interest which his character should inspire.

The teachers of the young should strive to be at home with Jesus, to know him familiarly, to form a clear, vivid, bright idea of him, to see him just as he appeared on earth, to see him in the very dress in which he manifested himself to the men of his age. He should follow him to the temple, to the mountain top, to the shores of the sea of Galilee, and should understand the mixed feelings of the crowd around him, should see the scowl of the Pharisee who listened to catch his words for some matter of accusation, the imploring look of the diseased seeking healing from his words, the gaze of wonder among the ignorant, and the delighted, affectionate, reverential eagerness with which the single-hearted and humble hung on his lips. Just in proportion as we can place ourselves near to Christ, his wisdom, love, greatness will break forth, and we shall be able to bring him near to the mind of the child.

The truth is, that few of us apprehend vividly the circumstances under which Jesus lived and taught, and therefore much of the propriety, beauty, and authority of his character is lost. For example, his outward condition is not made real to us. The pictures which the great artists have left us of Jesus have helped to lead us astray. He is there seen with a glory around his head, and arrayed in a robe of grace and majesty. Now Jesus was a poor man; he had lived and wrought as a carpenter, and he came in the dress common to those with whom he had grown up. His chosen companions were natives of an obscure province, despised for its ignorance and rude

manners, and they followed him in the garb of men who were accustomed to live by daily toil. Such was the outward condition of Jesus. Such was his manifestation to a people burning with expectation of a splendid, conquering deliverer; and in such circumstances he spoke with an authority which awed both high and low. In learning the outward circumstances of Jesus, we not merely satisfy a natural curiosity, but obtain a help towards understanding his character and the spirit of his religion. His condition reveals to us the force and dignity of his mind, which could dispense with the ordinary means of inspiring respect. It shows the deep sympathy of Christ with the poor of our race, for among these he chose to live. It speaks condemnation to those who, professing to believe in Christ, separate themselves from the multitude of men because of the accident of wealth, and attach ideas of superiority to dress and show. From this illustration you may learn the importance of being acquainted with every part of Christ's history, with his common life, as well as his more solemn actions and teachings. Every thing relating to him breathes instruction and gives the teacher a power over the mind of the child.

The Gospels must be the great study to the Sunday-school teacher. Many, when they hear of studying the New Testament, imagine that they must examine commentators to understand better the difficult texts, the dark passages in that book. I mean something very different. Strive indeed to clear up as far as you can the obscure portions of Christ's teaching. There are texts, which, in consequence of their connexion with forgotten circumstances of the time, are now of uncertain meaning. But do not think that the most important truths of Christianity

are locked up in these dark passages of the New Testament. There is nothing in the dark, which is not to be found in the plain, portions of Scripture. Perhaps the highest use of examining difficult texts is to discover their harmony with those that are clear. The parts of the Gospel, which the Sunday-school teacher should most study, are those which need no great elucidation from criticism, the parables, the miracles, the actions, the suffering, the prayers, the tears of Jesus; and these are to be studied, that the teacher may learn the spirit, the soul of Christ, may come near to that wonderful being, may learn the great purpose to which he was devoted, the affections which overflowed his heart, the depth and expansiveness of his love, the profoundness of his wisdom, the unconquerable strength of his trust in God.* The character of Christ is the sum of his religion. It is the clear-

* Commentaries have their use, but not the highest use. They explain the letter of Christianity, give the meaning of words, remove obscurities from the sense, and so far they do great good; but the life, the power, the spirit of Christianity, they do not unfold. They do not lay open to us the heart of Christ. I remember that a short time ago I was reading a book, not intended to be a religious one, in which some remarks were offered on the conduct of Jesus, as, just before his death, he descended from the Mount of Olives, and amidst a crowd of shouting disciples looked on Jerusalem, the city of his murderers, which in a few hours was to be stained with his innocent blood. The conscious greatness with which he announced the ruin of that proud metropolis and its venerated temple, and his deep sympathy with its approaching woes, bursting forth in tears, and making him forget for a moment his own near agonies and the shouts of the surrounding multitude, were brought to my mind more distinctly than ever before; and I felt that this more vivid apprehension of Jesus was worth more than much of the learning in which commentators abound.

est, the most beautiful manifestation of the character of God, far more clear and touching than all the teachings of nature. It is also the brightest revelation to us of the Moral Perfection which his precepts enjoin, of disinterested love to God and man, of faithfulness to principle, of fearlessness in duty, of superiority to the world, of delight in the Good and the True. The expositions of the Christian virtues in all the volumes of all ages are cold and dark, compared with the genial light and the warm coloring in which Christ's character sets before us the spirit of his religion, the perfection of our nature.

The great work then of the Sunday school teacher is to teach Christ, and to teach him not as set forth in creeds and human systems, but as living and moving in the simple histories of the Evangelists. Christ is to be taught; and by this I mean not any mystical doctrine about his nature, not the doctrine of the Trinity, but the spirit of Christ, breathing forth in all that he said, and all that he did. We should seek that the child should know his heavenly friend and Saviour with the distinctness with which he knows an earthly friend; and this knowledge is not to be given by teaching him dark notions about Christ, which have perplexed and convulsed the church for ages. The doctrine of the Trinity seems to me only fitted to throw a mistiness over Christ, to place him beyond the reach of our understanding and hearts. When I am told that Jesus Christ is the second person in the Trinity, one of three persons, who constitute one God, one infinite mind, I am plunged into an abyss of darkness. Jesus becomes to me the most unintelligible being in the universe. God I can know. Man I can understand. But Christ, as described in human creeds, a compound being, at once man and God, at once infinite in wisdom and ig-

norant of innumerable truths, and who is so united with two other persons as to make with them one mind, Christ so represented baffles all my faculties. I cannot lay hold on him. My weak intellect is wholly at fault; and I cannot believe that the child's intellect can better apprehend him. This is a grave objection to the doctrine of the Trinity. It destroys the reality, the distinctness, the touching nearness of Jesus Christ. It gives him an air of fiction, and has done more than all things to prevent a true, deep acquaintance with him, with his spirit, with the workings of his mind, with the sublimity of his virtue. It has thrown a glare over him, under which the bright and beautiful features of his character have been very much concealed.

From what I have said, you see what I suppose the Sunday-school teacher is to learn and teach. It is the Christian religion as unfolded in the plainest portions of the Gospel. Before leaving this topic, I wish to offer some remarks, which may prevent all misapprehension of what I have said. I have spoken against teaching Christianity to children as a system. I have spoken of the inadequacy of catechisms. In thus speaking, I do not mean that the teacher shall have nothing systematic in his knowledge. Far from it. He must not satisfy himself with studying separate actions, words, and miracles of Jesus. He must look at Christ's history and teaching as a whole, and observe the great features of his truth and goodness, the grand characteristics of his system, and in this way learn what great impressions he must strive to make on the child by the particular facts and precepts which each lesson presents. There ought to be a unity in the mind of the teacher. His instructions

must not be loose fragments, but be bound together by great views. Perhaps you may ask, what are these great views of Christianity, which pervade it throughout, and to which the mind of the learner must be continually turned. There are three, which seem to me especially prominent, the Spirituality of the religion, its Disinterestedness, and lastly, the vastness, the Infinity of its Prospects.

The first great feature of Christianity which should be brought out continually to the child, is its Spirituality. Christ is a spiritual deliverer. His salvation is inward. This great truth cannot be too much insisted on. Christ's salvation is within. The evils from which he comes to release us are inward. The felicity which he came to give is inward, and therefore everlasting. Carry, then, your pupils into themselves. Awake in them, as far as possible, a consciousness of their spiritual nature, of the infinite riches which are locked up in reason, in conscience, in the power of knowing God, loving goodness, and practising duty; and use all the history and teachings of Christ, to set him before them as the fountain of life and light to their souls. For example, when his reign, kingdom, power, authority, throne, are spoken of, guard them against attaching an outward import to these words; teach them that they mean not an outward empire, but the purifying, elevating influence of his character, truth, spirit, on the human mind. Use all his miracles as types, emblems, of a spiritual salvation. When your pupils read of his giving sight to the blind, let them see in this a manifestation of his character as the Light of the world; and, in the joy of the individual whose eyes were opened from perpetual night on the

beauty of nature, let them see a figure of the happiness of the true disciple, who, by following Christ, is brought to the vision of a more glorious luminary than the sun, and of a more majestic and enduring universe than material worlds. When the precepts of Christ are the subjects of conversation, turn the mind of the child to their spiritual import. Let him see, that the worth of the action lies in the principle, motive, purpose, from which it springs; that love to God, not outward worship, and love to man, not outward deeds, are the very essence, soul, centre, of the Christian law. Turn his attention to the singular force and boldness of language, in which Jesus calls us to rise above the body and the world, above the pleasures and pains of the senses, above wealth and show, above every outward good. In speaking of the promises and threatenings of Christianity, do not speak as if goodness were to be sought and sin shunned for their outward consequences; but express your deep conviction, that goodness is its own reward, worth infinitely more than all outward recompense, and that sin is its own curse, and more to be dreaded on its own account than a burning hell. When God is the subject of conversation, do not spend all your strength in talking of what he has made around you; do not point the young to his outward works as his chief manifestations. Lead them to think of him as revealed in their own minds, as the Father of their spirits, as more intimately present with their souls than with the sun, and teach them to account as his best gifts not outward possessions, but the silent influences of his spirit, his communications of light to their minds, of warmth and elevation to their feelings, and of force to their resolution of well-doing. Let the spirituality of

Christianity shine forth in all your teachings. Let the young see how superior Jesus was to outward things, how he looked down on wealth and show as below his notice, how he cared nothing for outward distinctions, how the beggar by the road-side received from him marks of deeper interest than Pilate on his judgment-seat or Herod on his throne, how he looked only at the human spirit and sought nothing but its recovery and life.

I have spoken of the Spirituality of Christianity. The next great feature of the religion to be constantly set before the child is its Disinterestedness. The essence of Christianity is generous affection. Nothing so distinguishes it as generosity. Disinterested love not only breaks out in separate teachings of Christ; it spreads like the broad light of heaven over the whole religion. Every precept is but an aspect, an expression, of generous love. This prompted every word, guided every step, of Jesus. It was the life of his ministry; it warmed his heart in death; it flowed out with his heart's blood. The pupil should be constantly led to see and feel this divine spirit pervading the religion. The Gospels should be used to inspire him with reverence for generous self-sacrifice and with aversion to every thing narrow and mean. Let him learn that he is not to live for himself; that he has a heart to be given to God and to his fellow creatures; that he is to do the will of God, not in a mercenary spirit, but from gratitude, filial love, and from sincere delight in goodness; that he is to prepare himself to toil and suffer for his race. The cross, that emblem of self-sacrifice, that highest form of an all-surrendering love, is to be set before him as the standard of his religion, the banner under which he is to live, and, if God so require, to die.

There is one other great feature of Christianity, and that is the vastness, the Infinity of its Prospects. This was revealed in the whole life of Jesus. In all that he said, we see his mind possessed with the thought of being ordained to confer an infinite good. That teacher knows little of Christ, who does not see him filled with the consciousness of being the author of an everlasting salvation and happiness to the human race. "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on me shall never see death." Such was his language, and such never fell before from human lips. When I endeavour to bring to my mind the vast hopes, which inspired him as he pronounced these words, and his joy at the anticipation of the immortal fruits which his life and death were to yield to our race, I feel how little his character is yet understood by those, who think of Jesus as a man of sorrow, borne down habitually by a load of grief. Constantly lead your pupils to observe, how real, deep, and vivid was the impression on the mind of Jesus of that future, everlasting life, which he came to bestow. Speak to them of the happiness with which he looked on all human virtue, as being a germ which was to unfold for ever, a fountain of living water which was to spring up into immortality, a love which was to expand through all ages and to embrace the universe. It is through the mind of Christ, living, as it did, in a higher world, that they can best comprehend the reality and vastness of the prospects of the human soul.

Such are the three great features of the religion which the teacher should bring most frequently to the mind of the child. In these, as in all my preceding remarks, you perceive the importance which I attach to the character

of Christ as the great means of giving spiritual light and life to the mind. The Gospels, in which he is placed before us so vividly, are in truth the chief repositories of divine wisdom. The greatest productions of human genius have little quickening power in comparison with these simple narratives. In reading the Gospels, I feel myself in presence of one who speaks as man never spake; whose voice is not of the earth; who speaks with a tone of reality and authority altogether his own; who speaks of God as conscious of his immediate presence, as enjoying with him the intimacy of an only Son; and who speaks of heaven, as most familiar with higher states of being. Great truths come from Jesus with a simplicity, an ease, showing how deeply they pervaded and possessed his mind. No books astonish me like the Gospels. Jesus, the subject of the story, is a more extraordinary being than imagination has feigned, and yet his character has an impress of nature, consistency, truth, never surpassed. You have all seen portraits, which, as soon as seen, you felt to be likenesses, so living were they, so natural, so true. Such is the impression made on my mind by the Gospels. I believe, that you or I could lift mountains, or create a world, as easily as fanaticism or imposture could have created such a character and history as that of Jesus Christ. I have read the Gospels for years, and seldom read them now without gaining some new or more striking view of the great teacher and deliverer whom they portray. Of all books they deserve most the study of youth and age. Happy the Sunday school in which their spirit is revealed!

But I have not yet said every thing in favor of them as the great sources of instruction. I have said, that the

Christian religion is to be taught from the Gospels. This is their great, but not their only use. Much incidental instruction is to be drawn from them. There are two great subjects, on which it is very desirable to give to the young the light they can receive, human nature and human life; and on these points the Gospels furnish occasions of much useful teaching. They give us not only the life and character of Christ, but place him before us in the midst of human beings and of human affairs. Peter, the ardent, the confident, the false, the penitent Peter; the affectionate John; the treacherous Judas, selling his Master for gold; Mary, the mother, at the cross; Mary Magdalen at the tomb; the woman, who had been a sinner, bathing his feet with tears, and wiping them with the hair of her head; — what revelations of the human soul are these! What depths of our nature do they lay open! It is a remarkable fact, that the great masters of painting have drawn their chief subjects from the New Testament; so full is this volume of the most powerful and touching exhibitions of human character. And how much instruction does this book convey in regard to life as well as in regard to the soul! I do not know a more affecting picture of human experience than the simple narrative of Luke; "When Jesus came nigh to the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her.' The Gospels show us fellow-beings in all varieties of condition, the blind man, the leper, the rich young ruler, the furious multitude. They give practical views of life, which cannot be too early impressed. They show us, in the history of Jesus and his apostles, that true greatness may

be found in the humblest ranks, and that goodness, in proportion as it becomes eminent, exposes itself to hatred and reproach, so that we must make up our minds, if we would be faithful, to encounter shame and loss, for God and duty. In truth, all the variety of wisdom which youth needs may be extracted from these writings. The Gospels, then, are to be the great study of the Sunday school.

I cannot close these remarks on what is to be taught in the Sunday school, without repeating what I have said of the chief danger of this institution. I refer to the danger of mechanical teaching, by which the young mind becomes worn, deadened to the greatest truths. The Gospels, life-giving as they are, may be rendered wholly inoperative by the want of life in the instructer. So great is my dread of tame, mechanical teaching, that I am sometimes almost tempted to question the utility of Sunday schools. We Protestants, in our zeal for the Bible, are apt to forget that the very commonness of the book tends to impair its power, that familiarity breeds indifference, and that no book, therefore, requires such a living power in the teacher. He must beware, lest he make the Gospels trite by too frequent repetition. It will often be best for him to assist his pupils in extracting the great principle or truth involved in a precept, parable, or action of Jesus, and to make this the subject of conversation, without further reference to the text by which it was suggested. If he can lead them by fit questions, to find this principle in their own consciousness and experience, in their own moral judgments and feelings, and to discover how it should be applied to their characters and brought out in their common lives, he will not only

convey the most important instruction, but will give new vividness and interest to the Scriptures, and a deeper conviction of their truth, by showing, how congenial they are with human nature and how intimately connected with human affairs and with real life. Let me also mention, as another means of preserving the Scriptures from degradation, by too frequent handling, that extracts from biography, history, natural science, fitted to make religious impressions, should be occasionally introduced into the Sunday school. Such seems to me the instruction, which the ends of this institution require.

IV. We have now seen what is to be taught in the Sunday school, and the question now comes, How shall it be taught? This is my last head, and not the least important. On the manner of teaching how much depends! I fear it is not sufficiently studied by Sunday-school instructers. They meet generally, and ought regularly to meet, to prepare themselves for their tasks. But their object commonly is to learn *what* they are to teach, rather than *how* to teach it; but the last requires equal attention with the first, I had almost said more. From deficiency in this, we sometimes see that an instructer, profoundly acquainted with his subject, is less successful in teaching than another of comparatively superficial acquisitions; he knows much, but does not know the way to the child's mind and heart. The same truth, which attracts and impresses from one man's lips, repels from another. At the meeting of the Sunday-school teachers, it is not enough to learn the meaning of the portion of Scripture which s to be the subject of the next lesson; it is more important to select from it the particular topics which are adapted to the pupil's comprehension, and still more necessary to in-

quire, under what lights or aspects they may be brought to his view, so as to arrest attention and reach the heart. A principal end in the meeting of teachers should be to learn the art of teaching, the way of approach to the youthful mind.

The first aim of the teacher will of course be, to fix the attention of the pupil. It is in vain, that you have his body in the school-room, if his mind is wandering beyond it, or refuses to fasten itself on the topic of discourse. In common schools attention is fixed by a severe discipline, incompatible with the spirit of Sunday schools. Of course the teacher must aim to secure it by a moral influence over the youthful mind.

As the first means of establishing an influence over the young, I would say, you must love them. Nothing attracts like love. Children are said to be shrewd physiognomists, and read as by instinct our feelings in our countenances; they know and are drawn to their friends. I recently asked, how a singularly successful teacher in religion obtained his remarkable ascendency over the young. The reply was, that his whole intercourse expressed affection. His secret was a sincere love.

The next remark is, that, to awaken in the young an interest in what you teach, you must take an interest in it yourselves. You must not only understand, but feel, the truth. Your manner must have the natural animation, which always accompanies a work into which our hearts enter. Accordingly, one of the chief qualifications of a Sunday school teacher is religious sensibility. Old and young are drawn by a natural earnestness of manner. Almost any subject may be made interesting, if the teacher will but throw into it his soul.

Another important rule is, Let your teaching be intelligible. Children will not listen to words which excite no ideas, or only vague and misty conceptions. Speak to them in the familiar, simple language of common life, and, if the lesson have difficult terms, define them. Children love light, not darkness. Choose topics of conversation to which their minds are equal, and pass from one to another by steps which the young can follow. Be clear, and you will do much towards being interesting teachers.

Another suggestion is, Teach much by questions. These stimulate, stir up, the young mind, and make it its own teacher. They encourage the spirit of inquiry, the habit of thought. Questions, skilfully proposed, turn the child to his own consciousness and experience, and will often draw out from his own soul the truth which you wish to impart; and no lesson is so well learned, as that which a man or child teaches himself.

Again, teach graphically where you can. That is, when you are discoursing of any narrative of Scripture or relating an incident from other sources, try to seize its great points and to place it before the eyes of your pupils. Cultivate the power of description. A story well told, and in which the most important particulars are brought out in a strong light, not only fixes attention, but often carries a truth farthest into the soul.

Another rule is, Lay the chief stress on what is most important in religion. Do not conduct the child over the Gospels as over a dead level. Seize on the great points, the great ideas. Do not confound the essential and the unessential, or insist with the same earnestness on grand, comprehensive, life-giving truths and on disputable articles of faith. Immense injury is done by teaching doubtful or

secondary doctrines as if they were the weightiest matters of Christianity; for, as time rolls over the child, and his mind unfolds, he discovers that one and another dogma, which he was taught to regard as fundamental, is uncertain if not false, and his skepticism is apt to spread from this weak point over the whole Christian system. Make it your aim to fix in your pupils the grand principles in which the essence of Christianity consists, and which all time and experience serve to confirm; and, in doing this, you will open the mind to all truth as fast as it is presented in the course of Providence.

Another rule is, Carry a cheerful spirit into religious teaching. Do not merely speak of Christianity as the only fountain of happiness. Let your tones and words bear witness to its benignant, cheering influence. Youth is the age of joy and hope, and nothing repels it more than gloom. Do not array religion in terror. Do not make God a painful thought by speaking of him as present only to see and punish sin. Speak of his fatherly interest in the young with a warm heart and a beaming eye, and encourage their filial approach and prayers. On this part, however, you must beware of sacrificing truth to the desire of winning your pupil. Truth, truth in her severest as well as mildest forms, must be placed before the young, Do not, to attract them to duty, represent it as a smooth and flowery path. Do not tell them that they can become good, excellent, generous, holy, without effort and pain. Teach them that the sacrifice of self-will, of private interest and pleasure, to other's rights and happiness, to the dictates of conscience, to the will of God, is the very essence of piety and goodness. But at the same time teach them, that there is a pure, calm joy, an inward peace, in

surrendering every thing to duty, which can be found in no selfish success. Help them to sympathize with the toils, pains, sacrifices of the philanthropist, the martyr, the patriot, and inspire contempt of fear and peril in adhering to truth and God.

I will add one more rule. Speak of duty, of religion, as something real, just as you speak of the interests of this life. Do not speak, as if you were repeating words received from tradition, but as if you were talking of things, which you have seen and known. Nothing attracts old and young more than a tone of reality, the natural tone of strong conviction. Speak to them of God as a real being, of heaven as a real state, of duty as a real obligation. Let them see, that you regard Christianity as intended to bear on real and common life, that you expect every principle which you teach to be acted out, to be made a rule in the concerns of every day. Show the application of Christianity to the familiar scenes and pursuits of life. Bring it out to them as the Great Reality. So teach, and you will not teach in vain.

I have thus set before you the principles, on which Sunday schools should rest, and by which they should be guided. If they shall, in any degree, conform to these principles, and I trust they will, you cannot, my friends, cherish them with too much care. Their purpose cannot be spoken of too strongly. Their end is, the moral and religious education of the young, and this is the most pressing concern of our times. In all times, indeed, it has strong claims; but it was never, perhaps, so important as now, and never could its neglect induce such fearful consequences. The present is a season of great peril to the rising generation. It is distinguished by a remarka-

ble development of human power, activity, and freedom. The progress of science has given men a new control of nature, and in this way has opened new sources of wealth, and multiplied the means of indulgence, and in an equal degree multiplied temptations to worldliness, cupidity, and crime. Our times are still more distinguished by the spirit of liberty and innovation. Old institutions and usages, the old restraints on the young, have been broken down. Men of all conditions and ages think, speak, write, act, with a freedom unknown before. Our times have their advantages. But we must not hide from ourselves our true position. This increase of power and freedom, of which I have spoken, tends, in the first instance, to unsettle moral principles, to give to men's minds a restlessness, a want of stability, a wildness of opinion, an extravagance of desire, a bold, rash, reckless spirit. These are times of great moral danger. Outward restraints are removed to an unprecedented degree, and consequently there is a need of inward restraint, of the controlling power of a pure religion, beyond what was ever known before. The principles of the young are exposed to fearful assaults, and they need to be fortified with peculiar care. Temptations throng on the rising generation with new violence, and the power to withstand them must be proportionably increased. Society never needed such zealous efforts, such unslumbering watchfulness for its safety, as at this moment; and without faithfulness on the part of parents and good men, its bright prospects may be turned into gloom.

Sunday schools belong to this period of society. They grow naturally from the extension of knowledge, in consequence of which more are qualified to teach than in

former times, and they are suited to prepare the young for the severe trials which await them in life. As such, let them be cherished. The great question for parents to ask is, how they may strengthen their children against temptation, how they can implant in them principles of duty, purposes of virtue, which will withstand all storms, and which will grow up into all that is generous, just, beautiful, and holy in feeling and action. The question, how your children may prosper most in life, should be secondary. Give them force of character, and you give them more than a fortune. Give them pure and lofty principles, and you give them more than thrones. Instil into them Christian benevolence and the love of God, and you enrich them more than by laying worlds at their feet. Sunday schools are meant to aid you in the great work of forming your children to true excellence. I say they are meant to aid you, not to relieve you from the work, not to be your substitutes, not to diminish domestic watchfulness and teaching, but to concur with you, to give you fellow-laborers, to strengthen your influence over your children. Then give these schools your hearty support, without which they cannot prosper. Your children should be your first care. You indeed sustain interesting relations to society, but your great relation is to your children; and in truth you cannot discharge your obligations to society by any service so effectual, as by training up for it enlightened and worthy members in the bosom of the family and the church.

Like all schools, the Sunday school must owe its influence to its teachers. I would, therefore, close this discourse with saying, that the most gifted in our congrega-

tion cannot find a worthier field of labor than the Sunday school. The noblest work on earth is to act with an elevating power on a human spirit. The greatest men of past times have not been politicians or warriors, who have influenced the outward policy or grandeur of kingdoms; but men, who, by their deep wisdom and generous sentiments, have given light and life to the minds and hearts of their own age, and left a legacy of truth and virtue to posterity. Whoever, in the humblest sphere, imparts God's truth to one human spirit, partakes their glory. He labors on an immortal nature. He is laying the foundation of imperishable excellence and happiness. His work, if he succeed, will outlive empires and the stars.

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WHAT IS TRUTH?

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WHAT IS TRUTH?

This is a question, which all are equally ready to ask and answer. On most subjects of research and interest, truth is daily elicited by the natural progress of science and knowledge. But on the prime subject of all, *religion*, if we may judge from the multiplication and mutual animosity of sects, there is now more doubt and difficulty in the quest of truth than ever before. Men devote the vigor of youth, the sound judgment of maturity, the wisdom of age, to the study of sacred science, and the issue often is mere vanity and vexation of spirit, with more vague and entangled notions than were cherished at the outset. But may there not be some shorter, less circuitous, and at the same time, surer route to the truth, than that of critical and philosophical analysis? May it not now be the case, as it was in the Saviour's time, that the things which are hidden from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes? I apprehend that this is the case; that the truth, as it is in Jesus, is marked by

unity, simplicity, and consistency, — that, though the most indefatigable efforts in the search of it may prove fruitless, yet he who assumes the right starting point, and takes the right direction, will surely and easily find it. My object in this tract is to guide the inquirer after truth. I wish to exhibit the only foundation on which a system of religious truth can be safely built; and then to show my readers how, upon this basis, they may interpret the scriptures, try the creeds of others, and construct their own systems.

We are then first to seek a *foundation* for the system of religious truth, for some great central doctrine, from which all others shall radiate, and by which all others shall be tested. The lack of such a foundation has been the defect, and has occasioned the dissolution of numberless systems. They have been composed of discordant materials. There has been in them no principle of cohesion, — no necessary connexion of part with part, — none of that strength which compactness alone can bestow. They have accordingly been attacked and demolished in detail. Far different has been the case with Calvinism, — a system which has cursed the birth, and triumphed in the death of hundreds of rival creeds, — a system which, though now known under the name of a modern reformer, cannot in fairness have a later origin assigned to it than the days of St. Augustine. Calvinism has a foundation. It is a regular and compact structure fitly joined together. This distinction is at once claimed for it by its advocates, and ceded to it by its enemies; and to this is it indebted for its length of days, and for the adamantine front, with which it has for ages blunted the weapons of theological controversy. Its foundation is the doctrine of man's

innate and entire depravity. Every doctrine of Calvinism flows as a necessary corollary from this, nor can any anti-Calvinistic notion be consistently held in connexion with this; so that it has been a common mode of proving and defending the whole system, to deduce this one doctrine from the alleged testimony of scripture, and then to draw all the rest as inferences from it. But it is evident at first blush that man's nature cannot furnish the foundation for a fair and just theology. For how difficult is it for us to know our own natures! We see but a part of ourselves, are familiar with but a portion of our own history. The questions, Whence came we? Whither go we? none of us can authoritatively answer. The world around us bears not our impress, reflects not our image. There is nothing without us to aid our self-investigations, or to verify their results; and human wisdom echoes the testimony of inspiration, that "the heart is deceitful above all things." But even admitting that we could thoroughly know our own nature, I deny that it could furnish a basis for religious faith, or a safe guide in theological inquiry. Theology relates to God, the universe, infinity, and eternity,—to objects as lofty as man's position is humble, as vast as his sphere is narrow. Man is out of all proportion insignificant, when viewed in connexion with these objects. He is too minute to furnish a fair term of comparison with them, or to reason from himself with regard to them. They cannot be measured by his stature, or weighed by his weight. To settle questions with regard to them by the analogy of his nature, would be like measuring the ocean with a thimble, or the circumference of the earth with a barley corn. A system of theology based on human nature must, if it recognizes the vast-

ness of its objects, be vague and intangible, from the impossibility of reasoning with distinctness from the infinitely small to the infinitely great; or if, on the other hand, the vastness of these objects be overlooked, the system will be narrow and grovelling, partaking throughout of the littleness of its foundation.

I apprehend that this last is the case with Calvinism. Founded on the narrow basis of human nature, and on narrow views even of that, its God, its Saviour, its atonement, its heaven, its hell, all are closely copied from the characters, sentiments, and actions of men; nor can we help being often reminded, in reading the works, or listening to the discourses of Calvinistic divines, of the words which the Psalmist puts into the Almighty's lips: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself." Let not these remarks be taken as the language of party acrimony. I most heartily accord my esteem and love to the moral worth and Christian piety, which have adorned the sect under discussion; — I am only speaking of the *philosophical* characters of their doctrines. Moreover, the Calvinism of which I am speaking, though it has a name to live, is now nearly dead, at least in New-England; its professed disciples having knocked away the foundation on which it had reposed immovably for ages, — the doctrine of innate depravity.

If then no view of human nature can furnish us the basis, which we need for our system of truth, where shall we seek it? Where but in God himself? Do we ask, What is truth? The reply is obvious; God is truth. Whatever is exists through Him, and is but the expression and manifestation of Him. God can create, will or effect nothing, which is not a copy of his own ideas, — a

transcript of himself. Nature, humanity, pardon, redemption, heaven, hell, eternity, all are emanations from his attributes. Before they become facts, they existed in the divine mind and purpose, and in strict accordance with the divine perfections. There can be no theological truth, which is not a necessary consequence of some portion of God's nature, or feature of his character. Were we fully acquainted with the mind and heart of any human being, we should be able to determine with unerring certainty what his decision, will or conduct had been, or would be under any given posture of circumstances. Just so, were we fully acquainted with God's character, we could settle beyond dispute every question that could arise with regard to his works and ways. By becoming conversant with him, we should know all truth through and in Him. Just ideas of the divine character must then be the basis of our theological system. The divine attributes are the central doctrines of religion, from which all our other doctrines must be consequences and inferences. We must first study Him who is the truth; and the knowledge of him will guide us into all truth. We must acquaint ourselves with him, who is the whole, and acquaintance with the parts will necessarily follow. We must make ourselves familiar with Him, in whom all things exist and take place, and in Him we shall discern the just theory of all existences, and of all events.

Moreover, as God is the source, centre, and sum of all truth; for that very reason, we have more ample means of studying Him, than of studying any detached portions of truth. Other objects we can learn from themselves alone; but everything teaches us of Him. External nature, the human soul, the course of events, the records of

the past, the forecast shadows of the future, all are full of Him. There is no possible research or inquiry, the result of which may not suggest, illustrate or confirm some feature of his character. And then, in the Bible, he has written himself out in full. In Jesus he has shown us the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. In the manifestation of God through Christ, there is no ambiguity, no room for conflicting theories, with regard to the attributes displayed; but the veil is rent away, and He, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, stands face to face with the children of yesterday and of the dust. Thus there is here a centre of union for all Christians. All own and worship the same God. Lay aside for the moment all other questions, and ask a representative of every sect in christendom, without touching on any of the usual topics of controversy, to give you an outline of the character of the God, whom the New Testament reveals, they would all draw substantially the same picture, though, the moment they touched upon other points of doctrine, they would shade and daub the picture by attributing ungodlike purposes and actions to the divine original. But this would result from their not making their ideas of God the basis of their theology.

Let us now attend for a moment to the character of the Supreme Being, which nature, Providence, and revelation agree in giving us. They first of all proclaim his goodness, his infinite love. This they set forth as the prime motive of all his works and dealings. This goodness is guided by infinite wisdom, governed by unerring justice. It aims chiefly at the moral purity and welfare of its subjects; and thus resolves itself into perfect holiness. It is every where present, and omnipotence waits

upon its fiat. The Being, endowed with these perfections, is also self-existent, independent in his volitions, and eternal. Such is the God whom we all agree to worship; and these attributes are the fundamental doctrines, — the ground-truths of Christian theology, on which what is built must be just, on which what is not built must be false.

I now proceed to show how, this foundation once laid, we are to proceed upon it in interpreting scripture, in trying the creeds of others, and in constructing our own.

In *interpreting scripture*, we must keep constantly in view its own representations of the divine character. If the Bible be the word of God, it must be consistent with itself; and therefore, when the import of any particular passage is doubtful, fairness not only permits, but demands that we should interpret it according to the general voice and tenor of the sacred volume. This is what is called interpretation according to the *analogy of faith*, — a principle which has been recognised by all sound critics, and which is liberally employed in the exposition of other books as well as of the Bible. It is freely used by Calvinistic expositors, who, having satisfied themselves that man's innate depravity is the fundamental doctrine of revealed religion, interpret into accordance with that dogma whatever might seem at first sight to militate against it. The principle is sound, though this particular application be unwarrantable. The principle is sound; nor could any book in the world be understood without its aid. In studying the Bible, we ought, by careful, diligent and impartial research, to ascertain precisely the ideas, which the sacred writers intend to convey of the Deity, and then to interpret by these ideas whatever expressions, apparently inconsistent with them, the im-

perfection of language, colloquial usage, or a figurative style may have led these writers to adopt. Thus, for instance, when the *hand*, the *arm*, the *lips* of the Deity are spoken of, we do not for a moment suppose that the authors of the Bible meant to imply that the Almighty possesses these bodily parts. We refer at once to their uniform and reiterated assertion of his spirituality, and conclude that these things are spoken after the manner of men, and to aid human comprehension. There is yet another class of expressions, to which we ought to apply the same solution, I mean those which impute *wrath* and *vengeance* to the Almighty. These have sometimes been so interpreted, as to clothe the Supremely Good in almost fiendlike attributes. But the Bible throughout represents God as unaffected by gusts of earthly passion, as enthroned in serene majesty, as administering even the harshest discipline by the laws of love; and the predominance of these representations obliges us in fairness to regard those of the opposite class as figuratively employed to denote results from the calm and righteous disapprobation of God, similar to those which are wont to flow from the wrathful and malicious passions of man. Let the same principle be applied wherever the language of scripture seems to militate with the acknowledged attributes of God.

We should, in the next place, employ the ascertained attributes of God as a *test* of the doctrines which others propose for our belief. With regard to every such doctrine, our first question should be, Is it consistent with what the Bible teaches us of God? If so, it may be true. if not, however plausibly defended, it must be false. Thus, take for instance, the doctrine, that all mankind are answerable for the guilt of Adam's transgression. The only question is: Is this doctrine consonant with that

perfect justice, which the Bible ascribes to God? An earnest and indignant *No* would be the instinctive response of every honest mind. It is intrinsically and necessarily unjust to deem any individual accountable for sins which he does not individually commit. We should therefore be justified in setting this doctrine aside at once as absolutely untenable, — as an idea, which cannot be cherished along with our faith in God. Nor can it be fairly urged that we are incompetent to sit in judgment on the ways of the Most High, and that what would be unjust in man may be just in him. I grant that we have no right to sit in judgment upon what we are *certain* that he does; but it is our right, nay more, it is our bounden duty to try what *men assert* that he does by what we know of his nature. Moreover, if what is unjust according to our ideas of right, may yet be just in God, then we know not what justice is, we can form no idea of the divine justice, and the words, God is just, are entirely empty and unmeaning. It is manifest that, when the sacred writers tell us that God is just, good and holy, they use these words in the sense which they commonly bear among men; and if they use them in any other sense, they are wanton mockers of human ignorance, and not the lights of the world. But with the usual sense of these words we are acquainted, and are amply competent to judge whether the purposes and operations which men ascribe to God, are consistent with it.

This then must be our criterion. All those dogmas which undermine the throne of God's justice, break the sceptre of his power, dim the vigor of his wisdom, we are bound unhesitatingly to reject. If scriptural proof be urged in favor of such a dogma, we are bound to do

one of these things, to prove that the scriptures do not teach it, to prove that the scriptures cast doubts upon the divine wisdom, mercy or justice, or to regard the Bible as self-contradictory and untrustworthy. To either of these two latter alternatives I apprehend that we shall never be driven; but that we shall always be able to bring ample scriptural testimony against every human dogma that rears itself in conflict with the divine attributes.

But we need not only to try the postulates of others, but to *build up our own systems of theology;* and this we must do on the attributes of God as a foundation. Truth on all subjects is, (as I have already remarked,) the transcript of the divine ideas, — the reflection of the divine attributes. What need we then, in order to ascertain the truth on any and every point, but to reason, from the analogy of what nature and revelation teach us of the character of God, to his will, works, and dispensations.

Thus, with regard to *Providence*, God's omniscience, justice and goodness, all oppose themselves to the idea of a merely general supervision, and leave us no alternative but the doctrine of a minute, particular, and constant Providence.

So with regard to *human nature*, if God be its author, it must bear his impress, nor can it be depraved, unless he be depraved; but, if he be good and holy, human nature, as it comes from his hands, must be stainless and pure. Nor will it suffice to say that man was originally thus created, but that from the sin of his progenitors he now comes into the world with a depraved nature. For in order to maintain this, you must either hold that God is not the creator of the men that now are, and thus deny his infinite power and perfect providence, or else,

admitting that each one of us is a child of God no less than Adam was, you must assert that a depravity emanates from him, which you would be shocked to impute to him, but which could not possibly flow from him in his works, unless it were a part of his character.

Thus, too, with regard to the *effect of sincere repentance* on the divine mind, we have only to combine God's holiness and love, and we cannot for a moment doubt that the penitent are forgiven; for, when infinite holiness has once attained its prime end of awakening the sinner to moral goodness and spiritual life, it would be impossible for perfect love to perpetuate the penal consequences of iniquity.

The nature of the *atonement* through Christ is also rendered clear and plain by similar considerations. If God be love unmingled and unlimited; if anger and wrath form no part of his character; if punishment be his strange work, and mercy his delight; then must we reject that view of the atonement, which represents Christ as interposing to disarm his Father's vengeance; and must adopt that view, which makes the Father and the Son one in the work of redemption, which teaches us that "God so loved the world as to send his Son to save it," — that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

Once more; similar considerations furnish us a guide to the truth, concerning a *future retribution.* The divine justice and holiness set aside at once the theory, which admits sinners and saints alike, immediately on death, into the same bliss and glory. The justice and mercy of God forbid us also to regard the rewards and punishments of the future life as equal and arbitrary; and com-

pel us to view them as the natural result and proportionate recompence "of the deeds done in the body," so that we shall literally be judged according to our works.

By thus applying our knowledge of the divine attributes to all the topics of theological inquiry, and adjusting our opinions by the analogy of those attributes, we may construct for ourselves a compact, uniform, and self-consistent system of Christian doctrine, which, if not absolutely and in all its details true, shall yet be relatively true, compared with systems formed on a different basis, and constructed on different principles.

In recommending this process, I do not mean to undervalue the diligent and prayerful study of the Bible, but only to urge the importance of its *systematic* study. The Bible is our prime source of light and truth; and on every point should be carefully and reverently consulted. But it is, as it seems to me, for want of systematic research into its contents, that men vary so widely in interpreting it. The course which I recommend is, first to ascertain all that the bible teaches of the divine nature, so as to obtain definite and coherent ideas of it, and then to make these ideas our key to the interpretation of what the Bible says on all other subjects. Thus, when the language of a passage of scripture taken by itself, will bear, and receives from different sects of christians two different meanings, we may be able to determine the true meaning, by ascertaining which accords with scriptural views of the divine character. No doubt the doctrines which God has revealed in the Bible, form a complete, harmonious, and coherent system, of which he is the centre, basis and sum. By commencing our researches with him, founding our doctrines upon his char-

acter, testing them by his attributes, we make as near an approach as a finite mind can make to that system of simple, pure, immutable truth, as it is viewed by the divine mind.

One practical suggestion, and I have done. I have represented the knowledge of God as lying at the basis, and constituting the sum and substance of all truth. I remarked at the outset that we might perhaps find the route to truth shorter and easier than is commonly supposed. The best and surest route is *prayer*. Communion, intimate converse with any being is certainly the best means of gaining his acquaintance. Prayer, communion with God, must needs be the best means of gaining the knowledge of him, and through him, of all truth. Had Christians wrangled less and prayed more, there would have been much more both of truth and of union in the church than there now is. And the reason undoubtedly why, in scriptural inquiry, the wisdom of the wise has been so often destroyed, and the understanding of the prudent brought to nought, is that they have not been men of prayer, while humble, unlettered Christians, simply because they have been prayerful, have had brighter, clearer, more accurate, more adequate views than have crowned the labors of the critic, or the subtlety of the expounder of dark sayings. Reader, would you learn the truth as it is in Jesus? Be instant in prayer, fervent in spirit; and in you shall be fulfilled the Saviour's parting promise, "The spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth. He shall show you things to come. He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you. He shall teach you all things."

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A

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OF HIS

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A STATEMENT OF FACTS.

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CONVERSION FROM CALVINISM.

LETTER I.

Dear W——n,—You desire of me some account of myself—of what I am, what I think, what I feel.

My childhood was reared under the influences of Calvinism. At the Sabbath School I was taught the Assembly's Catechism. I cannot forget those days. I well recollect the benevolent countenances of my Teachers, and the solemnity with which they told their young pupils that we were sinners, and must be born again or we could not go to Heaven. I recollect, too, the mingled look of still unsatisfied curiosity, and unanalyzed, yet real disappointment, which came over the more thoughtful of my class, whose minds were just beginning to unfold themselves to the intense impressions of religious things. The child does sometimes ask, What am I, what am I going to be? Who is God, and how can I love Him, and be happy? If he be misdirected in these young inquiries, these buddings of a desire for spiritual knowledge, although he himself may not be conscious of the wrong,

his whole nature feels it, and will be the sufferer for years.

My youth was maturing under the same instructions. Religion, which as a subject of thought often engaged my attention, and as a subject of feeling, deeply interested my heart, was a mystery to me. It was the fundamental article of my belief that I could not become religious, until I was made so by an extraneous, and special operation. Still I earnestly longed for the 'one thing needful.' I can but allude to the irrepressible desire, the cravings of my heart, for a full participation in the religious feeling. But the influences of my creed came over my spirit like an autumnal frost, and sealed up the fountains of emotion. Abused nature did not always remain silent under her injuries. She poured her complaints into my ear with a voice that I should not have disregarded. But the prejudice of education rendered these monitions powerless on my reason, and convictions. I supposed myself totally depraved; and thus was my earlier youth passed without being permitted to indulge in its proper religious sensibilities.

The works of God were all perverted to me. They were dispossessed of their highest, their religious beauty. When I fished by the river-side, when I rambled in the woods, when my fancy led me to a favorite hill-top that overhangs as lovely a landscape as our continent embraces, I thought this world was beautiful, I thought it beneficent in its uses, I felt that there was a unison between the scene around me and my own heart. But then I knew that my own nature was cursed, and that the earth had been cursed, and I supposed that this harmony was depraved, or at least that there was nothing desirable

about it, and I did not allow myself to cherish it as much as I wished, nor with that delight which it has since afforded me. I used to repine, almost, that I had not lived with Adam in Paradise, when the earth was *really* beautiful, and man's nature could properly sympathize with its charms. I used to hope that I might live to see the millenium, when this double curse would be removed, and men would be restored to the true enjoyment of nature. I looked up to the stars at night. I supposed that they had not been cursed. While my imagination would be revelling in the idea of their number and distances, my heart would throw itself abroad, and mingle somewhat in spirituality with the Infinite God who made them; I felt something of humility, something of adoration, something of love; — but I had not been converted. Of course my feelings were not religion. There could be no right harmony between my heart and the unsullied glories of God's handy-work which thronged the firmament.

The Bible had no promises for me, no consolations which I could appropriate. Its light, which sometimes beamed in upon my mind, went speedily out in the darkness of my creed.

At length a Revival came, that long wished for occurrence. Into its scenes of stirring interest and solemn devotion I entered, with that enthusiasm which the subject was adapted to enlist, and which my own nature prompted. I found that which I sought. I was happy in the free exercise of a new heart, and was satisfied in my election being secured.

Choosing the ministry as my profession for life, I was naturally led to examine the theory of my creed more

thoroughly, and to observe its practical exhibitions with greater attention. As habits of reflection increased, the grounds of my own religious character and feelings would become a subject of close and frequent analysis.

I had long felt, what indeed is apparent to every one, that there were inconsistencies in our public religious instructions These began to unfold themselves in a more full light. In one part of a sermon the sinner would be told to be active in the work of his salvation, and in another part he would hear it most explicitly avowed that he could do nothing. He would also be exhorted to be engaged for his salvation, and at the same time be told that his every act and thought were rebellion against God, until the Holy Spirit should convert him. He would be entreated in the language of Scripture to love God with all his heart, and yet be made to believe that in his very constitution, the innermost seat of his affections, he hated God, with a fixed, natural hatred. Election would be preached; and men would writhe under the doctrine — this would be laid to the charge of their implacable hostility to all truth. The preacher in his morning discourse, would prove that men naturally hate every thing good. In the afternoon he would present in the most impassioned language, the love of God and of Christ as a *motive* to induce sinners to exercise their love.

These are specimens of what appeared to be inconsistencies. The list might be continued much farther.

The practical effects of such a system of belief and preaching were, in many instances, but too apparent. I have seen doubt brooding over the soul, with all its harassments, disquietudes, and gloom. I have seen anxiety intense, troubled, hopeless, pouring itself out in tears and

sighs. I have seen despair with its darker horrors, settling upon the countenance, paralizing the heart, and spreading its midnight hues over life itself. I have seen men hastening from the family altar to the church, from the familiar friend to the pastor; but obtaining no relief; with natures crushed, and souls sickened, they have gone into life, hopeless men, coldly sceptical, to religious sensibility as lifeless as a rock. I have seen better results than these, and I have seen worse. I do not undertake to describe all that may be witnessed. My notice was directed to a single point,—that these unhappy results were experienced in the case of many who really *wished* to become religious. But their creed interposed a barrier, which their nature, already weakened by the discipline of its instruction, could not surmount. To see men of clear intellect, of warm affections, and high resolves, thus thrown back from the attainment of their great end, viz. a religious character, by a creed the professed object of which was their salvation, was a strange inconsistency that I could not reconcile. It did not satisfy me to be told that it was owing to their depravity; that they were unwilling to submit to the humbling doctrines of the cross. For I heard it from their own lips that they were willing to be anything, to do anything, if they could only become the children of God And their night-watchings, and fastings by day; their secret praying, so importunate as often to break out in tones that filled the air around, and pierced every heart; their constant attendance on meetings; their fixed and agonized attention to the preacher's words; — spoke a language of sincerity and earnestness, which it was painful to hear, and which the heart of man could not contradict.

I need not go on with this detail. I was led seriously to question if the theory of human nature, as held by the orthodox, was true. The argument, a priori, from the wisdom and benevolence of God, I found adverse to the popular creed. The thought is appalling, that the Deity should have created man, the being that stands out from matter and the brute, the being of free agency, and lofty aspirings, the being for whom this vast earth, with all its things, animate and inanimate, was made, and whom it serves, the being whom God himself links with himself in his great and benevolent designs of Providence and moral government, — that he should have created such a being to hate him; that he should have created him in the exercise of his noblest faculty, the purest, the choicest, the most valued part of his nature, the power of love and hate, to love only the bad and hateful, and hate only the good and lovely.

I looked into my Bible. On its first page was written, 'and God made man in his own image.' I found the same repeated through a history of four thousand years, and when the inspired record was being made up, and finally fixed for coming generations. St. James repeats the same glorious doctrine, Men "are made after the similitude of God." I found too at Sinai when the Infinite God made known his will to man, and nature from her depths and from her stillness broke forth, in sublime and solemn attestation that it was all truth, that there was no error, no delusion, no chicanery, when impressions were made on the universal mind of man which no change of place, no lapse of ages, could erase; that to the assembled hosts of Israel, to men, women, and children, to the righteous and the wicked; the great, the simple, the

unqualified command was given to *love God with all the heart;* without an intimation, without a whispering that that heart in its own nature was depraved, and that it must be regenerated before it could love.

The Analogy of Nature was replete with arguments. Philosophy and Science are demonstrating what the Scriptures have long ago revealed, that this earth is "good;" that nature, in the complexity of its laws, and infinite variety of its operations, is one unbroken system of beneficial adaptation. Our physical frame attests the same truth. Our intellect also is surrounded with its appropriate objects, by which it is ever won to action, and with which it is ever delightfully engaged. The soul we should *infer*, would be fitted to its objects. These are Truth, Religion, God. The Calvinist denies that there is any congruity, any sympathy, any adaptation, here. He says the soul hates what it should love, and only loves what it should hate.

My final appeal was to Consciousness. This was evidence that I could not mistake; evidence not altogether new, which I had always felt, but which I had not rightly interpreted; evidence which, while it renders luminous and decisive the other sources of proof, stands preeminently on its own eternal foundations; evidence which converted my fears into lively hopes, and my unbelief into a firm and rational faith.

Yet at this point, I was told, that one who had been converted, could not, from his present consciousness, judge relative to his original nature. But I had too intimately studied my heart, I was too familiar with it from its earliest history, to be disturbed by such a subtilty. The conclusion I could not resist, that it was the *same nature*, now smothered, now misdirected, now repressed by my

own sins and follies, which, from my childhood, had been endeavoring to break forth into its proper exercise.

Yours,

LETTER II.

My Dear W——n,—The doctrine of the Trinity, which is regarded as the great point of division between the Calvinists and the Unitarians, was secondary in the order, and the interest of my inquiries. I early found that it was a subject exceedingly difficult to reason about. There are no data, no starting points, no tangible grounds of argument. Of course it will be impossible to convey to your mind any idea of my *reasonings* on the subject. It is true there has been a great deal written, and many large volumes may be found arrayed on both sides of the question. But these were not satisfactory to me. The subject appeared to me too simple to admit of extended and diversiform argumentation. I cannot discover indeed, that my views relative to it, have undergone material changes, from all the courses of thought, which I have taxed myself to pursue. The doctrine, as it is expressed in the creed is, that there are three persons in the Godhead. If I asked a Trinitarian what he meant by Three Persons, he could never tell me. If an objection was urged to the tri-personal existence, it was replied that the whole subject was incomprehensible, and that it was not for us to judge upon the mode of God's existence. I saw that the *terms* of the objections which Unitarians advanced, were always faulted. Indeed they seemed to labor under a perpetual misapprehension of the question. If they averred that three could not be one, and one three,

they were told, that it was not understood that God was in the *same sense* three that he was one. If they alleged that the same being could not be both God and man, it was replied that they mistook the idea of the two natures. If they descanted upon the impossibility of believing an unintelligible proposition, they were met with long dissertations upon the nature of the mysterious. They were told every thing was mysterious, that there was nothing fully comprehensible,—to which they all readily assent. Texts of Scripture which may be quoted as proof that Christ is a subordinate being are instantly rebutted by this, and similar passages, I and my Father are one. So you will see the whole circle of argument was soon travelled over. It must be apparent after all, that the main and abiding reason for the doctrine of the Trinity lies in the supposed *necessity* of the doctrine; a necessity resulting from the Calvinistic view of the Scheme of Redemption. But according to that view, original Sin, or Total Depravity, is the great fact, the foundation stone, of the whole scheme. If this doctrine be denied, there exists no necessity for the other, and it readily passes from our minds, as a thing of little consequence, unsupported by reason or Scripture. I know indeed that it is attempted to be sustained as an independent doctrine of revelation, still I think that if it were not supposed to constitute the ground of the salvation of men, it would soon be numbered among the speculations of the past.

It is difficult to gather what is meant by the doctrine of the Trinity. The old notion of three persons is discarded by many Trinitarians of the present time. They speak of three distinctions. But is not this a distinction without a difference? Do they mean distinctions *in* God?

But is not this an absurdity? Do they mean distinctions *from* God? But is that God which is distinct from him? We are still asked if the doctrine of the Trinity be not taught in the Scriptures. If it be inquired what is meant — why the doctrine of the Trinity; and this is the finale of our discussions. Unitarians are censured for not understanding what Trinitarians mean by the doctrine of the Trinity. In very truth, we wish they would explain what they do mean. I am sure there are many among the Unitarians who would gladly embrace the doctrine if it be one of truth, of scripture, of intelligibleness, and of value.

It is said that we do know how our own soul and body can be united, and yet we be but one man. We do know that soul is not body, or body soul. The terms hypostasis, person, essence, godhead, divine nature, etc., appear to have been used, in various combinations, to conceal absurdities, to guard against an embarrassment of ideas, or as a subterfuge for ignorance. It is alleged that Unitarians pronounce the doctrine of the Trinity absurd, independently of an impartial examination of the Scriptures. On a comparison of ideas, however, it will be universally confessed, that *that, which* the Unitarians declare absurd, is absurd. We press the Trinitarian to state that view of God, which, in his own mind, is not absurd. We suggest, if it be possible, a hundred propositions relative to the Divine Being, each of which, notwithstanding his scrupulous ignorance of the nature of God, he does not hesitate to say is absurd or false. When he comes to state his own clear and satisfactory ideas, he presents us with nothing more or less than the Unity of God. I know, indeed, that no Trinitarian will for a moment deny the

doctrine of the Unity. But what does he, what can he believe *besides* that? Will he so state his belief, as that on the first breath of an explanation, it shall not be resolved into an absurdity, or a nihility.—Indeed we are compelled to feel that Trinitarianism is the real *negative* system. No Trinitarian will tell you what he does believe, but they all are making continual declaration of what they do not believe.

It is on account of its practical bearings that the doctrine of the Trinity is esteemed of so much importance among the Trinitarians. Yet it is in this view that its inconsistency is most decisively exhibited. Sin, they say, is an infinite evil. An infinite being must atone for it. God is the infinite being, and Christ is God. But did God, or did a "mode of the Divine Existence," suffer in this world and die on Calvary? I know the hymn reads, "And God the Mighty Maker died;" but is not the language repulsive to reason and shocking to our feelings? Who then did suffer and die, and make the Atonement, God, or an inferior being? It would be well for Trinitarians to ponder that question; if it can be a question.

I was more struck, in the course of my reading, than with anything else, with the controversy between Drs. Miller and Stuart, respecting the Trinity. Here were two gentlemen of distinguished attainments in Theological knowledge, Orthodox Trinitarians, respectively charging each other with a tendency to Unitarianism. In the slight "distinctions" in the Godhead, with which Professor Stuart is contented, Dr. Miller can detect nothing but a simple, or verbally qualified Unity. On the other hand, in the produced sonship, of Dr. Miller, Professor Stuart convicts him of an absurdity, or of pure Arianism;

i. e. of Unitarianism. The inference which forces itself upon the reader, in the perusal of those Letters is, that all intelligent Trinitarians *are* Unitarians. What was the effect of the correspondence upon the popular mind, I have not been able to learn. Doubtless it was not discreet for these brethren to fall out by the way, and the breach was quickly healed.

Trinitarians in their common, every-day, practical ideas, are Unitarians. They think of Christ as a being by himself, distinct from God, and inferior to him. They think of God as the Infinite Spirit that pervades and encompasses the Universe. They do not think of Christ in this light. Or if they make the attempt, their minds are pained with the ideas of a necessary separation, and the inevitable blending into indistinguishable unison. They pray to Christ, but never with the idea that he is the Infinite Jehovah. I have often conversed with Orthodox Trinitarians on these points and they have represented to me what I now write. My own experience was of a corresponding character. Still the doctrine of the Trinity was always a part of our Theology, it was printed in our creeds, and we felt bound to defend it, whenever it might be attacked. It is in respect to these prevailing familiar ideas of Christ, that I can perceive in myself but little change. When I was prepared to abandon the technical ideas of my creed, I still found every thing else undisturbed.

It is a noticeable fact, that at the present time, the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit is rarely made a subject of elucidation or proof. Of all the sermons that I have heard preached, only one occurs to me as having at all labored the point. Why is this? Is it because the

point is so self-evident, and satisfactory to the minds of all, as that it has passed into an undoubted truism? Or is it because the minds of intelligent Christians are growing dissatisfied with their reasonings, and shocked at their conclusions? It seems to me that if certain texts of Scripture determine the distinct personality of the spirit of God, there are also hundreds of similar texts which prove that the power, the wisdom, and the word of God, are distinct persons; and we may yet find a quaternity, a quinquenity, or any numeral character, in the Divine Nature. What are the limits of absurdity to those who have entered upon its precincts! The charge of presumptuously deciding upon the mode of God's existence, falls with all its weight upon Trinitarians themselves; who, not content with the universally received knowledge of men, and transcending both reason and revelation, have dared to penetrate the mysteries of the Infinite, and now with oracular assumption pronounce that the mode of his existence is tri-personal.

The idea of the Unity of God is the most perfect of all our ideas. It is a doctrine which Philosophy most clearly establishes, and which the Scriptures unequivocally attest. It is the doctrine of all Christians. We may add to this, that Trinitarians are in an infinitely higher sense Unitarians than they are Trinitarians. Their views of the Trinity are vague, confused, inferior, while their views of the Unity are distinct, simple, elevated. It must seem strange that they should adhere to such views; and stranger still that they should make those views the ground of their distinguishing appellation; and strangest of all that they should denounce those, who from the exalted tenet of common Christian faith, call themselves Unitarians.

I venture the conjecture that Trinitarianism is gradually merging itself into Unitarianism. Some Trinitarians will advance nothing in explanation of their doctrine. They avowedly leave it shrouded in its impenetrable darkness. But I often find, that when the attention of the individual is drawn to the subject, and he is willing freely to unfold his thoughts, he gives you in explanation simply this, that Christ was a manifestation of God, or that God manifested himself through Christ, which he says is the sense of the expression, God manifest in the flesh. This view, is, I believe, beginning to be very common. It is a view into which the mind naturally settles in the moment of its unbiassed contemplation. It is a view lying between the practical ideas to which I have alluded above, and the uncompromising language of the creed. It is a view — I hope none of our brethren of the Triune faith will be alarmed at the intimation — in which Trinitarians and Unitarians remarkably harmonize. This is its most wonderful feature, and it is nevertheless true. Indeed, I have found among the Unitarians quite a consistent Trinity. They readily concur in the doctrine of manifestations. It will be pleasing if Christians of opposite names can meet in this view and recognise in each other the elements of the same glorious truth. It is unnecessary to say that this aspect of the subject does not carry with it those revolting appendages, which characterise the doctrine of the creed. It is a doctrine of the Scriptures, of philosophy, of common sense, a doctrine at once appreciable by the intellect, and grateful to the heart.

I am yours,

LETTER III.

Dear W——n,— In the preceding letters, I have given you a summary account of some of the results of my inquiries. These may appear, at first glance, to be simple, natural, and easily reached. The process however is not instantaneous, or unattended with difficulties. Our religious investigations have this peculiarity, that at every step they are thronged with considerations of momentous and changeless consequence. In philosophy we may digress in our inquiries, diversify our experiments, revolutionize our theories, without the apprehension of affecting seriously the welfare of society, or of giving a new determination to our immortal destiny. In religion it is not so. A consistent religious course is of supreme value to every man, in this life. But in the next — who can measure the tide of consequences that flows on through eternity. We tremble at every thought, decision, act, lest we impart some slight bias to the nicely adjusted sequence of events, by which, in the progress of ages, instead of being elevated to the happiness we desire, we shall become involved in inextricable misery. Every man imagines himself to be safe in the religion of his fathers. He may be safe in the adoption of other views. He *may* hazard his everlasting well-being. He is at least secure where he is. Why then should he stake a venture?

You will find among Calvinists, in common with all religionists of a creed, — a certain something — which I cannot reduce in description, to a word. It is something which incorporates itself with the experience of the individual, and is not exhibited as one of the public, acknowledged points of the sect. It originates somewhat in this

way; the preacher declares in tones of solemn and confident earnestness, that on some particular doctrine, or system of doctrines, that of the Trinity for example, are rested alone the hopes of the salvation of men. Hence an instinctive and irresistible trust in the doctrine becomes impressed on the mind. It is a trust *in the doctrine*, not a rational resting on the *grounds* of the doctrine. The very words Doctrine of the Trinity, are hallowed in our associations. This trust in the doctrine passes by an easy transmutation, into a trust in Heaven; and its last office is to afford relief, when unwelcome fears of retribution press upon the thoughts. Of course there springs up in the mind a dread of denying the doctrine, and, I had almost said, a horror of embracing anything opposed to it, which overpowers and silences all rebellious convictions. This peculiar belief, or reliance on the doctrine, is not directly promulgated from the pulpit, nor is it familiarized in conversation. Still it may be discovered as a deep-seated sentiment of the heart. Constituting a silent under current of thought and feeling. This noiseless, unseen influence of the creed begins its action at the first dawning of our intelligent existence. As years advance it weaves its web with an invisible, yet with a skillful, and ever active hand, till we find ourselves at last hopelessly enmeshed in its toils.

It was often represented that if Calvinism were not true, in the first place, there was no necessity for a Revelation, and in the second place, what was taught in the Scriptures, was not true. Such statements furnished a fair opening for me, at once, to a general scepticism. But a kind Providence held me back from that abyss of horrors, and I was only permitted to take such a glance down

its fearful depths, as that I can the better lend succor to those who may be, in that way, tempted. Infidelity is so revolting, that if our Philosophy did not make us Christians, our affections would. But that is not our alternative. Philosophy, reason, and the human heart all conspire in teaching the great truth that Christ came from God. I rejoice to find in Unitarianism the amplest supports against infidel tendencies. The Unitarian possesses one peculiar advantage for this end. While he participates to their full extent in the arguments for Revelation, which other denominations confide in, to him alone belongs, in its amplitude and power, that argument which is derived from the adaptation of Christianity to the soul of man. This delightful view has recently been elucidated, in a manner at once scriptural, philosophical, and exceedingly gratifying by one or two writers of your denomination. Calvinism, you know, teaches that men hate Christ and God; that there is a natural and irreconcilable variance between the soul of man and Christianity, and a Christ-like religion. It teaches that there is every thing in Christianity to repel the human heart, and that men would never embrace it except as they are coerced by fears of final perdition, or by an omnipotent influence.

How do I know that Christ's mission was Divine, I said to myself, one day, as I sat with my bible before me. I had been reading several treatises on the Evidences. I could not deny that, so far as external proof was in point, they approximated to a clear demonstration. Yet my mind was not at rest. Men hate God, — I reasoned. Christ is from God. Therefore the first internal evidence of the divinity of his mission, will be the out-bursting of hatred from the universal heart of man. If men hate, it

is divine, if they love, it is not divine. But again, that alone is accredited among men; as in the highest sense the True, the Holy, the Divine, which in some way corresponds with the highest approbation of the human heart. Therefore it is impossible for God to make a Revelation of himself which shall gain credence in the world, without first changing the essential nature of the whole human race. This change has not transpired. Therefore there has been no Revelation: &c., &c. These you say are refined absurdities, and trifling difficulties. Yet they are real difficulties, of the first magnitude, to those who are driven to the metaphysics of the case. And as a Calvinist, I was perpetually involved in metaphysical subtilties.

I turned to the Sermon on the Mount. According to the received doctrine, this discourse is fitted to excite the enmity of all mankind. On the broad face of it must be stamped incongruity, unfitness, inadaptation. There is no element in the heart of man which corresponds with its heavenly precepts. It is not what men need or desire, for this world or the next: for man cannot be happy with what he hates. Of course a Heaven administered in the spirit of those instructions, would be miserable as Hell to him. His intellect could not discern their truth and beauty, for that alone, to us, is true and beautiful which in some way accords with the susceptibilities of our being. He cannot appreciate their loveliness, for his inmost soul abhors the supernal excellence of such teachings. Has God, I asked, made a Revelation of himself that shall only inflame the animosities of men, which it cannot subdue, and aggravate the calamities of mortal existence which it cannot relieve? I might have persisted in these perplexing abstractions, I cannot say how

long, when my thoughts were diverted, by the entrance of a little girl, who came tripping in, with the freedom and glee of youth. She was in the incipient developement of her primitive being.

She had not experienced, so far as I knew, a change from what was her original nature. I called her attention and read to her the verse, Blessed are the pure in heart, &c. and asked her if she thought it was good in God to bless only those who had pure hearts. "O," said she, "I wish my heart to be always pure." Then she added, with a look between a smile and a thought, such as you sometimes see pass over the face of a child, "I should not be happy, in Heaven, with God, if I had a wicked heart." All the world may not perceive the bearings of this slight occurrence. You will understand me when I say, it was a hint, a blessed hint, to better things.

Men universally do admire this Sermon of our Lord's. They pronounce it just, beautiful, divine. Yes, there are susceptibilities to heavenly beauty, and heavenly truth, in the human heart. This has lain at the foundation of the belief in the divinity of Christ's religion, in all ages of the Church. It actuated the primitive disciples, the ecclesiastical fathers, and the multitudes of the good, down to our times. With the external evidence of miracles, and the inward "witness of the spirit," how can we doubt! Christianity is a moral demonstration. I did not so understand it once. Many are not favored with that convincing aspect of the subject now. They are driven to feel that if they reject their creed, they must part with Christianity. They hesitate, as well they may, in respect to that other alternative. They linger about that land of darkness, and spectres, of fearful portents and gloom.

Would that the light of your better doctrine might pour its illuminations upon their pathway, and guide them to truth, hope, happiness and heaven.

The most serious difficulty that embarrasses the inquirer is *the dread of Unitarianism which pervades all classes of the community.* This prevails alike in the city and the country, with the clergy and the laity, with the learned and unlearned. It is strengthened and perpetuated, by discourses from the pulpit, by lectures in the private meeting, by circulars from ecclesiastical assemblies, by books and tracts, by conversation, — in every way. This is the parent and source of most of the impediments that obstruct our investigations, and every difficulty is aggravated by its influence. The prominent charges that lie against Unitarianism, may be reduced to two, its religious indifference, and its tendency to infidelity. I will not now delay to consider the merit of these charges. It answers my present purpose to state that they are circulated with assurance. Unitarianism is a terrible system. If it makes professions of Christianity, that is Deism in disguise. If it deny some favorite dogmas, that is open infidelity. If a Unitarian clergyman be very exemplary, he is too good for his people. I have often talked with my worthy Calvinistic friends, relative to the tenets in question. If they did not succeed in confirming me in the belief that the five points and Christ's doctrines are synonymous, still they would conclude with the earnest asseveration, that, whatever may be true in regard to this subject, Unitariansm cannot be true, it is such a *dangerous thing.* Thus in our inquiries, are we incessantly haunted with the idea of that dangerous thing. We mistrust our maturest judgments, we doubt our clearest con-

victions. We become timid and tremulous. Even the images of truth are shadowed forth to our disturbed fancies, as the spectres of error. When our views receive all the confirmation, which the most rigorous scepticism can demand, then some indefinable, obstinate doubt uniting with this secret, ineradicable dread, casts a gloom over that felicity which the accession of new and important truths is adapted to occasion.

This fear of Unitarianism prevents hosts of young men from examining its claims with impartiality. They do indeed give it some attention, not however to discover if it be true, but to detect the errors which it conceals. No one investigates it with the expectation, or even with the remote contingency in his thoughts, of being persuaded by its evidences. It is that dangerous thing, so inimical to virtue, so hazardous to Christianity.

This dread, when it exists in the minds of our personal friends, operates with a peculiar efficiency. How many a one is dissuaded from the obnoxious heresy, by the entreaties of a father, the solicitude of a mother, or by the anxieties of a valued friend. We can never feel, in the abstract, that we had better adhere to error for the sake of our friends; yet a regard to them may tempt us to resolve that we will not be *Unitarians*, at all events. In this dependent world, we become obligated to our friends. Those, whose kind offices and attentions have been multiplied upon us, in all the years and circumstances of our life, possess a paramount claim on our deference and respect even in matters of opinion. It is a practical question of no small interest, how far a man should be guided by his friends, in the regulation of his conduct, and in the exhibition of his principles.

We dislike to part with our early prejudices. We cling to them with a tenacity which defies separation, and with a fondness which refuses relinquishment. Our belief itself is not all intellectual; — it becomes a prejudice, and sinks with its deepest ramifications into the warm sympathies of the heart. I revere the prejudices of men, nor could I ever be willing to wage war with them. If they sometimes bar the progress from error, they also furnish the firmest support of truth. What is that truth worth which does not enlist the unrestrained favor of our hearts! Yet prejudices are dangerous. Their sway is despotic, and their influence magician-like. They render an old error effulgent with truth, and invest a new truth with the deformities of error. At such moments the spirit struggles bitterly, and almost yields in despair, before it accomplishes its release from the feelings and associations, which have constituted the earlier, and therefore the better, part of its existence.

Another difficulty arises from the flexibility of the creed. You wonder if the creed can ever possess this quality. There is a sense in which it betrays a spirit of compliance, or in other words, admits a latitude of interpretation. The creed consists of two parts, the philosophy, and the letter. While the latter is fixed, the first is variable. Suppose you present your theological perplexities to some friend, a sage divine, for solution. He will satisfactorily exhibit to you that your difficulty is entirely confined to your philosophy, or mode of explaining the creed; and he will dexterously forestall your farther inquiries, by representing that that is a point on which discrepancies of opinion are permitted and indulged, even amongst the orthodox. An inge-

nious friend once extended the philosophy of the creed to such dimensions as that it well nigh covered Unitarianism. I could but smile, while at the same time I more painfully realized the embarrassments of my situation. The doctrine of the Trinity, and of original sin, may be philosophized into things so harmless as not to annoy the most captious opposer. It is of a little interest to note, in passing, the process by which these and similar doctrines may disappear from the religious world. They will pass from their letter to their philosophy — which is indeed to a large extent their present stage. Here they will linger awhile, like lights and shadows of the sky, to please, instruct, alarm, to afford a theme for dispute and speculation; and then they will vanish into thin air, and be seen no more.

Unitarianism is ruinous to the soul — this is the prevailing impression. That an ignorant Unitarian may go to Heaven is allowed. But the case of the intelligent heretic, is at least uncertain. Of course the fear of retribution disturbs your equanimity, represses your mental freedom, and confounds the force of evidence. In respect to Unitarianism peculiarly; for reasons which you will gather from what I have written above; it is in the last degree difficult to dispossess the mind of considerations of future consequences, and to approach unbiassed the naked question, What is truth. Indeed, if we can once dispose of the question of the future, the gist of the difficulty is passed; for in that act we decide that the doctrines of Calvinism are not *essential* to salvation. It is curious and lamentable that we are obliged to make the question of consequence antecede the question of truth.

Yet such is our necessity. I say *our;* — I am speaking in some degree of myself personally. Yet I am very well assured that my representation will apply to a large number of individuals.

You will meet, in countless instances, with an argument or sophism of this description; it is better to believe too much than to believe too little. I am at least safe in Calvinism. Unitarianism may prove a hazardous system. This sort of reasoning, which is degrading to an independent mind, and unbecoming a Christian, which is properly fitting the dark ages of Papal superstitions, operates with thousands, as a fatal drug to overpower them with a lethargic indifference, and to prevent forever all freedom of religious inquiry.

Yours,

LETTER IV.

Dear W——n, — It is pleasant after the fatigues and harassments of research and controversy are passed, to find oneself emerged into the clear day-light of truth. While there are some things in the practical developements of Unitarianism, which occasion regret, still I discover much, very much, that offers an abundant, and an increasing satisfaction. The "Infidelity of Unitarianism," may indeed subserve the end of those who would intimidate the young inquirer, but an unprejudiced acquaintance with the proscribed sect, will at once relieve him of this anxiety. Each denomination of Christians, it may be remarked, disbelieves, or is infidel to, the peculiar points that distinguish its neighbor. The Unitarian re-

jects the doctrine of the Trinity, and of Original Sin, and, to that extent, is infidel, not to the Bible, but to the leading articles of Calvinism. *He believes in whatever is essential to the perfection of the Christian character.* Whatever truth in the bible, or out of the bible, contributes to this heavenly consummation, receives the warmest welcomes of his heart. All truth is divine, is a maxim both for his preaching and his practice. Unitarianism is true to human nature. Christianity and human nature harmonize. This great and unchangeable law will forever prevent any relapse into Infidelity.

The charge of indifference, so often preferred against Unitarians, may have some ground in truth, but it has more in appearance. In the first place, I discover that they cherish stronger religious emotions than they care to exhibit; being restrained by the excessive, and, as some would say, fanatical, manifestations of feeling on the part of the Christian denominations by whom they are surrounded. In the second place, the severe and protracted controversy, through which they have been struggling, has divided their attention between the mere intellectual subjects of discussion, and the more serious demands of the heart and life. This deficiency they lament, while at the same time there is unequivocally indicated a purpose to cultivate, with renewed assiduity, that spirituality and devotedness, which shall assimilate them more to their Divine Master. How is it possible, I would inquire, considering the subject in an abstract light, that any class of Christians, who believe in the doctrines of holiness and accountability, should remain, for a series of years, without a decided and vigorous religious character. If we would but acquaint ourselves with the fundamental principles of

humanity, we should be prepared *beforehand*, to find Unitarians yielding their hearts to those influences which are so powerfully impressed by our common Christianity.

Need I express to you that in the circles of Unitarianism I meet with multitudes of warm-hearted, zealous Christians, when the fact might be known and acknowledged in our whole community, but for that infatuation which blinds men to the excellencies of those against whom their prejudices are arrayed. In many with whom I am daily associated, in others whose "good report" is silently spreading, there are exhibited a spirit of devotedness, of self-sacrifice, of untiring zeal, and of humility, a love of truth and of holiness, a dread of sin, an aspiration and earnest endeavor for entire conformity to the divine will, and an ardent desire to advance the welfare of their fellow-men, which truly it is delightful to observe any where; which I have often witnessed among the various denominations of Christians; yet which when exhibited here, become a triumphant vindication from the charges of indifference, which are heaped without measure upon Unitarians, and afford abundant assurance that with them also rests the spirit of our Master; and that, however disowned they may be on earth, they will participate His rewards in the day of account. Unitarianism has not reached perfection. How far it ranges below that ultimate standard you know better than I do. It is its earnest of good things to come that encourages our hopes, and awakens our sympathies.

There is one thing which engages my attention much; it is the *naturalness* of the religion of Evangelical Unitarians. Religion with them does not appear, as we sometimes witness, an exotic transplanted to an uncongelial soil,

to be cultivated by artificial appliances; but as something which has sprung up in the native mould of the heart. It is warm, free, constant. It is not active for a time, and then chilled by the intervention of worldliness. It is not assumed for a Sabbath, a meeting, or an accidental emergency; but interests itself in the various circumstances of life, and expresses itself on every fitting occasion. It mingles with the recollections of childhood, and with the scenes of youth. God has ever been to it a Father, the Holy Spirit a Sanctifier, and Christ a Saviour.

Evangelical Unitarianism does justice to human nature. This is its peculiar excellence. Systems of faith, and Creeds of the Schools, have trodden our nature under foot, and reduced it to a condition at once infamously base, and despairingly hopeless. Christ did not come to create a new race of beings on the earth; but to develope, bring out, elevate, and reestablish the existing race in its original purity. Unitarianism recognizes in all men the priceless "pearl" of the "kingdom;" and it would raise them up into the full light of truth, and the rich joys of holiness. It is teaching the great doctrines of humanity, which shall subvert and utterly demolish, throughout the world, every system of oppression and degradation, religious, moral, and political. It is teaching the sublime, and God like lesson of the worth of the universal human heart. Unitarianism has been called a soulless system. It is the only faith which gives a soul to man,—a soul worth the possession. How worse than worthless is my soul, if, in the very necessities or certainties of its being, it must hate God, and all excellence.

Evangelical Unitarianism realizes and appropriates the teachings o' nature. From the manner of treating this

subject on the part of many Calvinists, I should infer that the heavens did not show the glory of God, or the earth exhibit his handiwork. They affect to smile at the emotions raised by the influences of nature, treating them as mere fancies, natural sensibilities, temporary exhilarations, allowing them to partake not at all in the genuine religious feeling. I have learned that Nature is but another volume of Revelation, and that all its influences are sacred.

Evangelical Unitarianism derives support and illustration from every discovery in science. I will not allude to the Unity of God, since that is claimed as common ground. Its great doctrine, that the human soul, which is the chief work of God, is made for the highest aspirings, and the holiest ends, is sustained by the clearest, and most diversified analogies of Nature. The science of the stars and the earth, of things organic, and inorganic, of mind and matter, conspire in teaching this one lesson, that God has adapted all his works to the supreme good; and that as the budding flower advances to the perfection of its beauty and expansion in the light of the sun, so the intellect of man reaches its full developement under the influences of Truth, and his heart in the exercises of Love;—Truth as it is in the Highest and Holiest, Love of the Highest and Holiest. What a weight falls from the oppressed spirit that moment, when we learn that this beautiful world does not lie under a sentence of perpetual wrath, and that our cherished hearts are not cursed with an inevitable depravity, and a universal hate.

Evangelical Unitarianism recognizes the elements of universal human perfection. In the eye of an exclusive faith, the elect may hope to arise in the image of God. But the mass of men can only await the degradation to

which their proper natures subject them. Liberal Christianity furnishes ample provision for all men to enter upon a course of spiritual developement and acquisition, with the unqualified assurance, that, aided by the blessings of the Spirit, they may attain to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.

Evangelical Unitarianism, disowning creeds, divisional names, and exclusive rites, constitutes *character*, the test of the Christian. This, I believe, is in imitation of Christ, and like the administrations of the future world.

It leaves the soul of man free to its legitimate exercise. Never restraining the mind within the narrow and shadowy confines of a creed, it summons it ever to a bold investigation, unfolds it to holy influences, that flow out from universal being, and bids it, in upward progression, seek, appropriate, and transfuse itself with those illuminations which emanate perpetually from the great Fountain of Light. Oh to be free, to feel the shackles of dogmatic prescription fall off from the tired spirit, to breathe the pure air of Heaven's truth, is a measure of felicity which the stranger intermeddleth not with.

It indicates the true malignity of sin. If men are born depraved, it can neither excite our wonder, or demand our condemnation, if they do sin, and that without cessation and without remorse. But if coming into being with natures fitted for the excellence of God, they disregard their high destiny, and voluntarily rush upon wickedness, the heinousness of the sin can only be compared with that of the angels, who "kept not their first estate."

Evangelical Unitarianism exhibits itself to me as the last hope of Christianity in the world. An *exclusive* faith, in the nature of the case, can never become *universally*

prevalent. Whether all shall be called Unitarians is a trifling point. Names are nothing. The character, the spirit are every thing. The labors of Unitarians have already disseminated an influence, which is liberalizing creeds, enlarging the boundaries of sect, and is bringing the holy of all denominations to recognise in each other the image of God, and to fasten upon the simple yet all-embracing principle of character, in contradistinction to mere belief, as the touchstone of genuine christian excellence.

It furnishes the only feasible plan for the union of all denominations. Men will always differ in respect to articles of faith, but in the estimation of character there is ground for ultimate harmony.

I have thus sketched for you some points in my religious thinking and experience. It is not surprising that I should cherish a degree of attachment for that system of faith, or rather I would say, for that interpretation of Christianity, which embodies so much of the spirit of our master, and seems so eminently fitted to redeem and bless mankind. It is said that Unitarianism is a religion for cultivated minds alone. This is not true. The degraded thrall, wedded to toil, immersed in ignorance, by man oppressed, and by man forsaken, looking on its teachings, rises up a living, breathing image of his God. It is alleged that while it elevates man, it derogates from the character of God. Is not the infinite God manifested to us in his supreme attributes by the greatness of his works? Would God be less if men were Gabriels? It is said that it makes men proud. Issuing from nothing, a worm of the dust, invested by God with immortality, whose assimilation to the

Infinite, that end of your being, can alone be attained by humility before Him, — can you be proud? It is said that it trusts to good works for salvation. I never have met with a Unitarian who acknowledged any other savior but Christ. If by *good works* is meant right action from right motives, that is the conceded essence of all religion. Whosoever does thus and feels thus, possesses the life of God in his soul, and manifests the works of God in his action. He is saved from sin, which is the salvation of the gospel. He sins no more, which is the regeneration of the gospel. He is holy, and his Heaven is secured. I do not hesitate to pronounce the charge of dependence upon morality "mere morality," which is reiterated against the Christians of your name, to be unfounded and untrue, in all its length and breadth. I am sure when Christians come to know each other better, they will love each other more. Could they but love each other more, then they would know each other better.

I would indulge no unkindness of feeling, and no habit of neglect, towards the large body of Christians, with whom, from my childhood, Providence has assigned my lot. With them dwell many religious associations, which I enumerate among the most cherished of my life. Many of the worthiest Christians, with which the world is blest, those whom I shall ever delight to hail as brethren, are within the pale of the Calvinistic churches. The substantial excellence of their character would have influenced me to remain with them, but the severity of their creed obliged me to depart.

Unitarian Christianity has a great work to accomplish, first, in the radical establishment in its own heart of its

own principles; secondly, in the extension of its elevated doctrines, and benign spirit, among the nations of men. Truth may not be covered with a bushel. It must be disseminated. This is the law of moral beings. Who will hazard its penalties? Truth was made for the world. Let it have feet that it may run, tongues that it may speak, books that it may be read. A weight of responsibility presses upon evangelical Christians, which, unless discharged to the last article of its demand, like the stone rejected by the builders, may fall upon, and grind them to powder. Like the primitive disciples, many Unitarians seem to be tarrying at Jerusalem. While there may they receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. When they disperse, may it be to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the world, with a meekness that shall disarm opposition, yet with a courage that shall confront every danger, and with a perseverance that shall not relax, till christian liberty, light, and love are brought to triumph with a universal sway.

Yours,

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GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

It has been generally assumed in all ages of the church, that *uniformity of belief*, a oneness in speculative faith, is the only ground on which Christians can be one in brotherly fellowship and in the bond of peace.

We begin the present discussion with a direct denial of this principle as unsound, unevangelical, and pernicious. Uniformity of speculative opinion ought not to be regarded as the bond of union and the ground of fellowship among Christians; and men by their speculative differences do not violate the essential oneness of Christianity.

Jesus Christ could not have required or expected unity of speculative opinion with regard to his revelation, for the good and sufficient reason that there cannot be any such unity. The history of opinions and the history of human nature, from the earliest times to the latest, prove that there cannot be any thing like uniformity of opinion on subjects that admit in any degree of the exercise of

reason. Such differences began under the ministry of the Apostles themselves. They sprang up immediately, in the very churches of their own planting. They have continued ever since, varying continually as to the subjects and modes of difference, yet always differences. Never for a moment have Christians agreed as to what are the true and only speculative doctrines of their religion. Every method that has ever been projected of reconciling such differences, has long ago proved itself chimerical, absurd and impracticable. Every experiment, that has ever been made to produce uniformity, has aggravated the supposed evil, warred against human nature and human liberty, done great mischief, and turned out a miserable failure.

The attempt to produce uniformity of belief has been made in every age, in every form, and by every imaginable means, and all have failed. The church of Rome tried it. They set up a standard of belief; the scholars of Christendom maintained it, the collective wisdom and imposing authority of famous Councils sanctioned it, the successors of St. Peter were set for its defence, the arm of physical power was stretched out in its behalf, and the terrors of earthly and eternal torment were made to beset every by-path of heresy and schism; but it was a failure. The early Protestants tried it. Scarcely had they broken out of the fold of Rome, when they began their measures for uniformity. Synods were convened, and decrees and confessions were published from various quarters, with revilings and persecutions more abundant; but it was a failure. Luther and his coadjutors tried it, and failed. Calvin and his disciples tried it, and failed. The Church of England tried it, and failed. Every act

of intolerance seemed to give birth to new heresies, and every blow that was struck for uniformity opened new seams in the church and broke off more fragments from the mass. The creeds of modern sects, set up with the same view to uniformity, are failures. The manifold exhibitions of intolerance in our own day, and all around us, are indications of the same vain hankering and struggling after uniformity, and they all fail. There is no such thing as uniformity. There is no approach to it. We differ about different things, it is true; but we differ as really and as much, as did our predecessors in any age of the church. Time raises new questions as fast as it settles old ones. The history of the past, and a glance at the present state of things, show it to be the most visionary of all vain imaginations to suppose, that there can ever be, while the Bible and human nature continue to be what they are, that there can ever be a Church Universal, whose bond of union and fellowship shall be a speculative uniformity of belief.

From these considerations we must infer, what we began by saying, that Jesus himself did not require or expect a speculative uniformity amongst his followers. Had he only possessed the sagacity of a worldly-wise man, he must have foreseen that such agreement would be utterly impracticable. And surely the infallible teacher from God, whose title was the Prince of Peace, and who taught that love was the keeping of his commandments, such an one cannot for a moment be supposed to have made the keeping of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, to consist in a kind of uniformity, the impossibility of which would be proved as soon as he had left the world, and be confirmed stronger and stronger in every

succeeding period of his church. He could not have meant to establish a principle, which, the moment it was adopted and acted upon, would prove itself to be irreconcilably at variance with the first principles of his religion, those of brotherly love and union. There are and always have been differences of opinion, honest and rational differences, between persons having on other subjects equal pretensions to the credit of intelligence and fairness of mind, differences among those who recognise the same inspired teacher, and have before them the same sacred and undisputed records. And men, if they think and reason at all for themselves, and if they are to have any real belief, cannot help thus speculatively differing; and it is a stigma upon the Son of God to say, that he has forbidden such differences either positively or virtually, that he has given to every sincere believer the right to suppose that he and his sect have alone the mind of Christ and are true to his religion, and the consequent right to disown, excommunicate, and cast out as evil, all who differ from such sect. They who hold that Christ demands uniformity of speculative opinion, must of course regard their own opinions as the standard of that uniformity, and they must in consistency suppose that they are authorized by God to hold every dissenter from that standard as an infidel, an alien, and an outlaw. And those dissenters, and every petty portion of them, and every individual of them, have the same counter authority with respect to their opponents. And thus Jesus himself is made to forbid, absolutely to forbid, all brotherhood and fellowship amongst his disciples, to cast an unquenchable firebrand in the midst of them, and to justify and sanction a spirit of exterminating and eternal war amongst them.

But this cannot be so. This cannot be the divine purpose. Speculative uniformity cannot be the requisite bond of unity among the disciples of Christ. And, though there were as many differing sects in Christendom as there are individuals, this circumstance would not impair the true grounds of their unity one whit.

After taking this position, it is incumbent on us to state what we do regard as constituting the essential oneness of Christianity. What is the broad ground on which those who stand are really one and should regard themselves as one in Christ, having no reason for jealousy or distrust, having no right of mutual recrimination and denunciation, no good plea for contentious division? What is the standard, around which all who rally are one in the sight of God and Christ, one upon the principles of the gospel, and might and should be one in mutual sympathy and fellowship, owning one another, and rejoicing together in a common faith and hope? We answer, it is what all serious believers in Christ as the son and messenger of God, propose, desire, and are satisfied with, as the result of Christian faith. It is the keeping of the commandments of Christ. It is piety and moral goodness, it is the cultivation and exercise of Christian affections and Christian principles. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his," and if he have the spirit of Christ, he is his. This is the ground of unity which we think our Master has marked out. This we all understand and understand alike. There is no dispute about what is the spirit of Christ. We all learn

it, and learn it alike, from himself, from his words and his history, from his example of piety and obedience to God. The result is the same (wherever it exists,) whether accompanied by one set of speculative opinions or another. About the religious affections and the religious character, considered in themselves and purely as a result, there can hardly be any misunderstanding. It is Character that constitutes the one Christianity.

But it may be objected that, though the moral result be the great thing about which the individual should be concerned, yet that is not a proper or convenient or practicable *test*, by which men should judge of each other's claims to Christian fellowship; that such a test is too judicial in its nature, that it would require too much of a system of moral *espionage* and investigation, too much judging of the brethren. We will admit the objection and yield to it. Let it be that a profession, either express or virtual, of some doctrines, together with a decent outward show of Christian virtue, is the most suitable test, the only practicable one, the true ground of visible fellowship and union. Let it be that we are to take cognizance of the doctrines of an individual or sect, and adjudge or withhold the Christian name accordingly. Let it be that this is the gospel test. We have yet something to say, why we still decline taking the popular ground, the battle ground, of speculative uniformity.

We would maintain that the doctrines, the leading and fundamental doctrines of the gospel immediately concern and directly relate to the moral character, to the practical part, the affections of the heart and the conduct of life. The truths of the gospel are moral, and not speculative truths. The doctrines of our religion are chiefly moral

One eminent exception, however, demands notice in the outset, viz. The great introductory doctrine of the gospel, it is true, is not strictly of this moral class, though it was a necessary introduction to a system of moral truths. It is a speculative doctrine, we mean the doctrine that "Jesus is the Christ," that he was an inspired and commissioned messenger from God to man. Jesus himself constantly set forth this as the primary speculative truth. He is constantly arguing it and insisting upon it. He made his miracles bear towards the proving it and the bringing it home to the convictions of men. He generally uses the word Faith in reference to this single truth. In the few instances in which he applies it differently, it means confidence in the providence and promises of God. The Apostles, in their subsequent preaching and writing, took the same course. When by the preaching of Peter three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, the only speculative doctrine proposed, the only one addressed merely to the understanding, was this same truth, thus summed up in his own words: "Therefore let all the house of Israel assuredly know that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." When, afterwards, by the preaching of the same apostle five thousand believed, the only speculative article recorded in his sermon, was the same, — that God had raised up his son Jesus, and sent him and glorified him. When Philip discoursed with the Eunuch, and converted and baptized him, the only speculative doctrine was this, "I believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God." In what did the conversion of Paul consist but in the conviction, produced by the miraculous vision on the way to Damascus, that Jesus was from heaven, and was in

heaven, was the Christ? as we are told, that, as soon as he recovered his sight, he "straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." And so on throughout the numerous instances of Apostolic preaching and success recorded in the Book of the Acts, this great article of speculative faith stands conspicuous and alone;—alone, if we make this one other exception, that in some cases the undisputed Christian doctrine of a future life, of "the resurrection of the dead," is brought forward.

Now we mean not to say, that there are no other speculative doctrines revealed in the New Testament. On the contrary, we and all Christians do believe some others; though from our different modes of interpreting language and weighing evidence we differ somewhat as to what those doctrines are. But we do mean to say that, after the exceptions of speculative truth just considered, which all Christians believe equally and alike, moral truth and moral teaching hold the highest and the largest place in the gospel.

By moral, as distinguished from speculative truth, is meant that which not merely demands the assent and reception of the understanding (which is all that speculative truth requires,) but which, while it convinces the understanding, goes directly and of its own nature to the springs of action, and demands a direct influence upon the moral state of the soul and the conduct of life. We must not understand the word *moral* as opposed to the word *religious;* for the former in its highest sense includes the latter. Moral truth means all the truth that pertains directly to the best guidance, the purifying and adorning, the elevation and blessedness of the soul, both

as to its inward state and its outward action. And such truth, we repeat, is the great burden of gospel teaching. Speculative systems may with propriety be deduced from the New Testament; but a moral system, moral truth, may also be deduced with a clearer light, with a more unquestionable authority, with a more important bearing and purpose, with a fuller testimony and a more earnest solicitation from Jesus and his Apostles. And next after the admission of the divine authority of Christ the teacher, such a system of truth ought to stand foremost in our regards. It ought to be considered as *the* truth, the *leading* truth, the *great* doctrines, the fundamentals, to be believed with the heart unto righteousness. But let us illustrate.

The doctrine of man's moral accountableness to God, who will judge him with a righteous retribution for his deeds, whether they be good or whether they be evil. This is a moral truth of the Gospel. It aims directly at the conscience. According to the strength and vividness of man's belief of it, it goes at once, fraught with mighty motives and the solemnities of judgment, to the heart, and lays hold of the moral sentiments and moral capacities, and demands holiness,—holiness to the Lord. This doctrine is abundantly unfolded, illustrated, and urged in the gospel. It is constantly on the lips of Jesus. In some of its branches it is scarcely ever absent from his mind. It runs through, nay it constitutes in letter and in spirit, the Sermon on the Mount. It gives the meaning and point to many of the striking parables which make up so valuable a part of gospel teaching. The parable of the Talents, of the Vineyard, of the Rich Man and Lazarus, of the Ten Virgins, and several others, set forth this

moral truth. And we know of no denomination of Christians amongst us, that do not profess to receive this doctrine, and that do not in their own way exhibit and urge it. In some cases, to be sure, we think it is done imperfectly, yet it is done in the way which they think right and most forcible. And as well might the lips of the infant Jesus have been sealed in the manger of Bethlehem, as well might the Scriptures have been irrecoverably lost in the night of the dark ages, as this doctrine be denied or disparaged. Man is accountable to his Maker for the good and evil of his heart and life. This is the truth of Christ. It is responded to by the human heart. It is spoken from the heavens. It is answered and echoed from all souls in all Christian lands. It is a Christian *doctrine*, and what merely speculative and disputed doctrine shall we for a moment couple with it in grandeur and importance?

Again, the kindred doctrine of repentance and forgiveness is a moral truth of the gospel, a leading truth. The gospel is one loud and continuous call to repentance, accompanied by a constant assurance of God's forgiving mercy. The forerunner John introduced the new dispensation by the preaching and the baptism of repentance. "Repent, repent," was the salutation of Jesus to the haughty and hardened Pharisee, to the profligate and contemptuous Sadducee, and to the humble Publican. His ministry was to an erring and lost world, and the ardent desire continually burned in his bosom, that they should repent and turn to God, and be saved and blest. The doctrine of repentance was embodied in the brief form of prayer which he gave to his disciples. It inspired the touching parable of the Prodigal Son, and that of the

Fig tree that bore no fruit and cumbered the ground. It breathed in his prayer as he wept over the coming calamities of the devoted yet beloved Jerusalem. The preaching of it to all people was his parting charge to his disciples. And when he had gone to the Father, it was still a first and great doctrine with the apostles. They first testified that Jesus was the Christ, and then called on all men to repent. "Repent," said Peter at the conversion of the three thousand, "for the promise is unto you and your children." "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," was the language of the same Apostle when the five thousand believed. "Repent," was the appeal of Paul at Athens, and Ephesus, and throughout Asia, and at Jerusalem, and wherever he went. Repentance is, therefore, to be regarded as a fundamental doctrine, expressly stated, amplified, and urged a hundred times oftener than any one of the disputed speculative doctrines of Christendom is incidentally hinted at, or obscurely involved in some of those discussions into which the Apostles were sometimes drawn with the Jewish bigots and carping sophists of their day. As a *doctrine* therefore, as a subject of revelation, and divine teaching, it should hold, in our ideas of importance, a high preeminence over such speculative doctrines. Man's capacity and duty of repentance and God's sparing mercy and long suffering compassion,—that must be a distorted system that does not place these among the foremost of its doctrines.

Love to God is an express and richly illustrated doctrine of the gospel. Sometimes it appears in the form of a general commandment, and sometimes in special precepts of piety and obedience. Sometimes it comes as an

invitation, sometimes in a parable, and sometimes in an argument. Now it is a duty, and again it is an honor and a privilege. Here it is spoken of for reproof, and there in winning and comforting words. It is shown how man can love his Maker and Father, how he can admire, adore, and love his perfections, how that love can warm him with filial piety and manifest itself in the keeping of his commandments, how it implies trust and gratitude, patience and hope, and begets joy and peace, how it makes the child like unto the Father, and prepares him for the bliss of his nearer presence. All this teaching constitutes a doctrine, a glorious doctrine. And a system of doctrines that should leave it out or give it an inferior place as a doctrine, such a system would be the coldest abstraction of the intellect, all barrenness and darkness.

Once more. Love to man is a Christian doctrine. It is taught, and is therefore a doctrine. The life and death of Jesus are a continued inculcation and exhibition of it. How does it run through his precepts, how does it shine in his miracles, and breathe in his prayers, and speak from his cross, and gird him up for suffering and death. And how incessantly and tenderly does the beloved disciple dwell upon it. How urgently does every Apostle commend it. Love, the source and sum of the social affections, the spirit of social kindness and benevolence, the spirit of justice, integrity, mutual forbearance and forgiveness, and of universal philanthropy, the bar against selfishness, the expanding and warming principle of the soul, such love is taught, explained,—it is a Christian doctrine. And can we survey the relations of man to his fellow-men, and see how we are bound up in each other for mutual happiness, and how the bond of love se-

cures that happiness, how dreary the earth is, and how dark the prospect even of heaven without it, and at the same time see how pressingly, persuasively, and in all ways the Gospel urges it, and then think that any speculative article should have preference over it as a fundamental doctrine? No, this is a principal doctrine of the gospel.

From these general moral doctrines we might go on and state those which are more particular, embracing the instructions of the New Testament concerning all spiritual and all outward excellence. But these are sufficient to illustrate our position, that moral doctrines are the primary ones of Christianity. But to what purpose have we labored to show the great importance of these moral subjects, seeing that all Christians admit it? It is true that all do admit it. But they do not admit it to the full and proper extent. Ask almost any man who is much interested in religious subjects, and is devoted to the interests of any sect, believing, of course, that that sect is nearer to the whole truth than any other, ask him what he considers the great, leading doctrines of the gospel, will he refer us first to the moral instructions of Jesus, and out of these specify some of the great doctrines? Not at all. He will refer us at once, and with all zeal, to the speculative doctrines of his sect. These will be uppermost in his mind. If we ask him what he thinks of the moral doctrines with which the Bible is chiefly occupied, he will readily admit their great importance, and say they ought certainly to be attended to, and next to faith, that is, faith in his peculiar speculative opinions, moral subjects are the highest. Still we shall find the second rank assigned to them. They do not rise first to the mind,

when men talk about Christian doctrines or a Christian system. Christians pass over the smooth and level plain of Christian morals, where the spirit of Jesus dwells, where are the treasures and delights of his kingdom,—the neutral ground, the ground of peace,—and flee to the mountains, to contend for the faith amid rocks and woods and fastnesses, in the region of clouds and storms.

The importance of faith cannot be ranked too high. The first preliminary article, that which opens the door of Christ's kingdom to the soul and prepares the way for a more comprehensive faith, is, we have said, the truth that Jesus is the Christ. We are willing to add the doctrine which the Apostles sometimes placed in connexion with this, that of the resurrection of the dead. And next comes a moral faith, unapproached in importance by any other faith. We want none so much as a deep, firm, vivid, and enlightened faith in the moral truths of the gospel. It is a faith in our moral relations to our God, and in our moral discipleship with Christ. It is a belief that we have a great moral work to do, and by the grace of God can do it. It is the belief that a pure heart and a good conscience are the richest possessions that the universe affords. It is a faith in repentance, the conviction that we are sinners, and that we can and must repent of sin and turn and live, and that God is a forgiving Father, ready to raise up the fallen, to take back the erring to piety, virtue, and peace,—to himself. It is faith, a vital and predominant faith, in our improvableness in piety and holiness, that we must, that we can, make progress in the new and divine life, continually forgetting the things that are behind, and looking to the things that are before, and pressing on from height to height and from

glory to glory. It is the sublime faith that goodness of heart and life, sought after, attained, and constantly increased, is appointed by God to constitute our glory, our perfect and eternal bliss, and that by our love and fear of God and our hope of his favor, we must live and labor for it, and, if need be, suffer and die for it.

Such is Christian faith in its true and highest sense. These, we think, are the articles of the true system of Christian doctrine,—its foundation, its frame, and adorning. This is the faith that is the armor of God. This is the faith that rests not upon the mere convictions of reason, but goes at once into the inmost soul, and demands fidelity to itself, to its nature, powers, light, and privileges,—devotedness to God and duty, to Christ, to its own high, unchanging, and infinite happiness.

Jesus Christ declared, "I am the truth." We interpret his words by his life. His active, spotless, and wonderful life bodied forth, as it were, the doctrine which he taught. His whole character and history are one eloquent exhibition of moral truth, and an incitement to a living and practical faith in such truth. It was a literal expression,—"I am the truth." He was, throughout, the perfect manifestation of moral truth. And this is the truth for us to study, to employ our faculties upon most strenuously, to be most anxious to understand and to propagate. This is the truth to be held as identical with the gospel, as the Christian system. And this is the faith for us to cherish and strengthen, for animation, for warning, for comfort, for moral power, for growth in grace and piety. It is a faith to go with us and operate in all the periods and in every walk of life, to humble us in sin, to nerve us up for fidelity, to keep duty and accountableness in mind, to

make life a glad and earnest effort after moral goodness and improvement. This is the faith to be kept, that we may pursue and finish the Christian course, and attain to the crown of rejoicing that is laid up in heaven for them that believe.

We have thus endeavored to show the true comparative rank of the moral doctrines of the gospel. And if our conclusions are just, we infer that here and here only ought uniformity to be demanded as the test of orthodoxy, the conditions of universal fellowship. On this point uniformity is attainable, and really exists among all serious believers in the New Testament. And no other uniformity is attainable or ought to be demanded.

All the evils of ecclesiastical division, all that exhibits Christendom to men and angels as a divided and distracted community, maintaining hundreds of hostile and irreconcilable religions under the name of a common Master, all arises from the fact, that men make the essence of Christianity to consist in speculative doctrines and not in moral ones, and accordingly make the unity of the church to consist in a speculative uniformity which is needless and impossible, and not in the uniform reception of those moral truths which are fully revealed and are not differed about. Each individual Christian or sect sets down a point of meeting, where it is impossible to meet, and makes Christianity consist in meeting there, and feels and acts as if such meeting were essential. There are of course a thousand such points, and hence a real division and all the jarrings and jealousies and strifes, deadly and interminable, which have so rent and distracted the church, that should be one in the bonds of love and peace. The evil arises not at all from the specula-

tive diversities that do and must prevail, but from men's regarding those diversities as violations of the oneness of Christianity. Neither does the evil consist in what we suppose to be the speculative errors of any system of Christian doctrine, as such; but it arises from the idea that that one system, or any other particular system, is the one indivisible and essential Christianity, and from the dispositions, principles, and measures which necessarily accompany that false idea.

We will endeavor to illustrate these remarks by applying them to the case of one or two Christian sects.

Take the Catholic Church for example. It is not its doctrinal system, as such, that is to be most lamented. We may, indeed, think that that spiritual condition which gave rise to, and which is most favorable to the continuance of such a system, is not the highest and most desirable for man; but, seeing that that condition has existed and does exist, the existence of the doctrinal system is not to be mourned for. The evil lies not in the doctrines. They have been the means, and, under the circumstances, probably the necessary means of bringing multitudes to true Christianity, the Christian character. We think we see much error in this system; we could not adopt it; it would not help *us* in the attainment of true Christianity. But there are a great many minds in such a state of intelligence, or so cast and formed, by constitution or circumstances, that it is just what is needed to christianize them. The evil all lies in the extraneous parts of the system. The enormities which we deprecate proceed from the idea that the moral doctrines which the system may accompany, and the Christian character which it may produce, are not Christianity, but that the doctrinal

system itself is the one essential Christianity, and that conformity to it is the test of Christianity. This idea is the very corner-stone of the Romish constitution. It pervades the whole organization. It is an avowed principle and appears in every measure of church policy. And this principle, that there must be uniformity of faith, and that that one system is the single standard of such uniformity, and that all departure is damnable heresy, is the root of all the evil. It is this bad principle that started and established the idea that the bishop of Rome has an apostolic commission, and that he, aided by his councils, is the supreme spiritual legislator of the world, competent to decree, and authorized to enforce, that uniformity. It is this principle that has afforded that church a reason for its vast secular aggrandizement, thus leading the way to those corruptions of a pecuniary and political nature, which have brought such scandal upon the name of Christ. It is upon this principle that the Scriptures have been wrested from the hands of men, lest notions should be derived from them inconsistent with Christianity, that is, with the Romish system, notions that would disturb this essential uniformity. It is this principle that has built inquisitions, kindled fires, and persecuted and murdered good men. It is this principle that has made Catholic countries peculiarly prolific in infidelity and irreligion. Here is the worst consequence. It has excluded and denounced every other system. It has striven by all means to keep all minds fast bound down to this one. It has not permitted those minds that never could, or had ceased to be able to embrace that system and be influenced and christianized by it,—it has not permitted them to seek and adopt for themselves a different system, with

which they might have an affinity, in which they might have a belief, and the peace and sanctifying influence of believing. Accordingly such minds have had no faith and no Christian influence, and hence infidelity and irreligion. The history of France at the time of the first Revolution, when she voted herself a nation of atheists, illustrates this evil, the process and the extent of it. And whatsoever else we might find to deplore in Popery, it has its origin in this same fundamental principle, that there must be a uniformity of belief, and that Popery is of course the standard.

It is the same with Calvinism, either as it existed in the mind of Calvin himself, or under any of its modern modifications. There are many who think there is speculative error in that system. It is not the system that they can believe. But that is no objection to Calvinism. There are other minds, as honest and docile as theirs, that can and do receive it and do arrive at Christianity through it. It may seem to us an unreasonable system; but there are minds with which it has an affinity, with which it can coalesce, minds that are in a state to need this very system. We, with our turn and habits of mind, cannot know what is the process of this assimilation, what is precisely the state of the soul in receiving this system; and it is not necessary for us to know. But we do know, if we know any thing about it, that multitudes of souls which do receive it, do somehow receive the power of religion along with it, receive all that the soul needs, moral truth, and moral strength, piety, virtue, peace, and a hope full of God and immortality. There may be much error in the system, but it contains so much of truth, or is so apprehended by certain minds, as to make them all

that they need to be, religious. The evil is not in Calvinism as a system of theological opinions. All the evil that we associate with that system arises from the idea, that there must be a speculative uniformity throughout the church, of which Calvinism is of course the standard, — an idea that has become so extensively incorporated with that system as to be nearly identified with it It is this idea, with all the bitter uncharitableness and the unholy means and measures that frequently proceed from it, that constitutes the unchristian part of the system.

We have not space to speak of other systems in the same connexion. But, in passing over them without notice, we do not mean to acquit them of the same charge. And whenever and wherever this idea of uniformity of speculative belief, constituting Christianity, has become deeply incorporated with any doctrinal system, it has, so far, turned that system from its proper course, and its benign influence of saving and blessing the souls that could sympathize with it, and made it a monster of absurdity and mischief. It has often given a fiendish aspect to systems otherwise good. It has tracked their course, sometimes with blood and fire, and always with the worst of passions and the worst of consequences. It is this idea that has so often turned Christian hearts into stone. It has frozen up the fountains of Christian love and even of the natural affections. It has armed human tongues with the stings of vipers. It has caused the press to send out rivers of wormwood. It has changed the language of the pulpit from the message of peace and good will into the hoarse and grating tones of malice. It disturbs the quiet of communities. It alienates neighbours and near friends. It holds up holy and Christian men to scorn. It divides

Christ, and divides his Church. It is the demand for speculative uniformity that leads to all this; and systems of faith that might, that do, when this demand is kept out of view, lead humble and believing souls to Christ, and form them to holiness and fit them for heaven, are thus perverted to pernicious ends. The true ground of uniformity is overlooked, and a kind of uniformity is demanded, which is as impossible, as it is unevangelical and unnecessary. It is not the variety of systems, but the demand made and acted upon that there should be but one system, and that there is no Christianity but in conformity to that.

It may, perhaps, be inferred from the tenor of our remarks, that we would have all systems of doctrine regarded as equally true, and that none can have grounds of special confidence in his own opinions. But not so. All the various systems that are believed are to be regarded as so many forms or modifications of truth. All doubtless are the vehicles of much and the most important truth, and probably none of them contains the whole, — pure, unmixed truth. It is not to be expected, that we can in this life attain to the whole truth, and the pure truth, on such subjects — subjects relating to the infinite God and the world of spirits. We embrace such doctrines, and only such, as we think we find communicated in the gospel. And we have confidence in the truth of our opinions, because we cannot help having confidence in our own intelligence and discernment, and in the convictions of our own understanding. From the very nature of belief, we cannot help regarding our own opinions as the truth, and other systems as erroneous so far as they differ from ours. We cannot help having more confidence in

our own minds than in those of others who differ from us. At the same time, we are to consider how possible and and how necessary it is for minds, differently cast and trained, to view the same general truth under somewhat different aspect, and to think they find reasons for believing some things which we, with our modes of judging, do not find to be revealed. We do not, on this account, have less confidence in what we believe to be revealed, nor have others, nor should they have, less confidence on account of our dissenting.

Thus God, in his adorable wisdom, has adapted his revelation to the various spiritual wants, and circumstances of his children. All can take the needful truth which is there, and so mould and modify it, that their minds can fasten upon it, and coalesce with it, and feel its power. All systems, thus deduced, contain the vital spark, the redeeming and sanctifying principle, which was meant to be imparted. Yes, they are all good for the minds that embrace them in the state in which they embrace them, and if they embrace them freely and in good faith, they all give man a Christian faith. They all raise the mind to a revealed God, and extend its views to a revealed eternity. They all bring the soul into believing communion with the blessed Jesus. They all present his image of perfect goodness, his spirit, his example, seeking a place in the hearts of men. They are all fitted to open the soul and prepare it for the indwelling and effectual working of the Holy Spirit. They all can lead their respective adherents to the same point, to the one Christianity, the one Christ, the one consummation, even the favor and acceptance of God. They are all so many somewhat differing scaffoldings, built up on the pillars of faith around the

one temple of truth and holiness; and if we would all be content to stand upon our own, and cease to be offended with those of our brethren, and look together towards the one temple, and work together in building it up, and worship together the one spirit that dwells therein, then God's will would be done, and the followers of Christ would be one, and his kingdom would be divided no more on earth.

One more wrong inference needs to be guarded against, namely, that according to these views, there ought to be no speculative discussion, and no efforts to extend what we believe to be the truth. This inference is not to be admitted. Such discussion and such efforts, in their proper place and degree, are wanted; for there is still, amongst us, and everywhere, a world of minds which have not found their true place, have not found any settled faith, nor felt the sanctifying influence of any system. We ought, in Christian love, to wish them to have such a faith and feel such an influence. And therefore all Christians should regard it as a duty to present to the world their several forms of belief, with their reasons for believing. Unitarians, for example, ought to set forth their doctrines and their reasons for believing; for we think that amongst those who have not yet known Christ there are multitudes of minds, which, by their constitution or condition, are fitted to embrace our speculative views while they could not embrace others, and to find a power, and a light, and a joy in them which they could find in no others. It becomes us therefore, not with a sectarian ambition, not with the mad and foolish project of making all the world conform to our system as the only standard, but as fellow-laborers with all Christians for the advancement of a common cause, it becomes us to proclaim and

maintain our views of Christian truth. So that while we believe that all systems have their place, and have a part to perform in this common work, while we would pray that by all means all may be saved, we should hope, as the servants of Christ, by our means to save some. This is the true ground on which discussion, calm, catholic, and benevolent discussion is needed.

If the principles which we have endeavoured to unfold were adopted and acted upon by Christians, the effect would probably be, that many speculative doctrines now held sacred by various sects, perhaps by ourselves, would gradually become obsolete. Many, perhaps all, existing systems might be dissolved, and parts of them become the elements of new combinations. Light would break more freely from the gospel and be received into more willing and uncommitted minds. It is useless, as it is impossible, to predict the results of a state of things so new and imaginary; but whatever they might be, it can scarcely be doubted that they would be such as the friends of Christian truth and righteousness might rejoice in.

We have thus labored to show in what consists the essential oneness of Christianity, — that it does not consist in an impossible uniformity of opinion, that it does consist in the reception of the moral truths of the gospel, that the variety of systems in the world does not by its existence imply a reproachable or undesirable division, that all the evil of division arises from overlooking the true point of union and insisting upon a speculative uniformity.

These are the views that make for peace, plead for peace and union, on the only ground on which they can be attained. It may be long before the hope of such union will be realized. But it is a Christian hope, for it

finds sympathy in the gentle spirit of Christ. It is a soothing and comforting hope, for it relieves us from the desperate and soul-hardening belief that it is our duty to wage an exterminating war against all systems but our own, and plant the standard of peace upon the ruins of the faith of millions of the good. It is a glorious and elevating hope, for it brings to view, though in a distant and dreamy scene, the disciples of Christ going on, side by side, as brethren, with mutual love and congratulations, laboring for the extension of the one blessed kingdom, and God and Christ smiling down with approval and a blessing upon this keeping of their commandment of love.

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A

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COMPETENT

TO THE WANTS OF MAN.

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A

RATIONAL FAITH

COMPETENT

TO THE WANTS OF MAN.

Jesus of Nazareth knew what was in man. Unlike the enthusiast or the misanthropist, he treats him neither as an angel nor as an animal. Himself created the model of human nature, he had but to look within to learn its capabilities, and to feel its wants; and, planted amid human beings, he had but to look around him to discover where its condition fell below its destiny. To him it appears, as it really is, a nature noble, but weak; never so low as to be past hope, nor so high as to be above progress; often afflicted, yet able to rise above sorrow; tempted, yet capable of victory. His own soul was his interpreter of humanity; his own life a compendium of human experience; and when he spake to the tried or mourning spirit, he seemed to be uttering the reasonings which had been effectual with his own mind. Listen to him conversing with the afflicted, and can you fail to recognise the man of sorrows? See him melting himself before the melted penitent, and gazing on guilt

with serene and pure compassion, and can you fail to remember the struggles of the desert, to trace a soul in which the causes of sin had once risen to the surface, and which knew the effort needed to sink them again in the depths of holy resolve? Or, watch him when in contact with death, and who does not discern the spirit that had mused solemnly on mortality, and prayed near many a familiar grave, and imbibed the true peace of the immortal hope? Where, indeed, was the woe too wayward for him to understand? Where the want too refined for him to reach? All the trains of human emotions—all the group of circumstances which make up human vicissitudes, appeared to be pictured upon his imagination: he seemed like the searcher of all hearts, because he had deeply read his own.

And if Christ manifested this sympathy with every thing human, this penetration into the experience, and adaptation to the wants of man, so does his gospel. For, indeed, he is himself his gospel—*he* is his own truth. A sinless and immortal being is our revelation; teaching all duty by his life, and all faith by his destiny. Whatever is asserted of him, is asserted of the gospel. The written record of his history is but like his perpetuated presence upon earth; going about doing good; claiming affinities with all that belongs to human kind; insinuating itself into the heart of the repentant, and receiving on its open page his most sacred tears; bracing the feeble energies of conscience, and warming into existence new moral perceptions; lighting up visions of peace before the eye of bereavement; and saying to the troubled waters of passion, "Peace! be still." Christianity has a voice for every department of our nature—an entrance at every ave-

nue of the soul; it has its blessings for every variety of mind. He that wants hope, he that wants motive, he that wants solace, may find it there. There the intellect may meet with truths greater than its philosophy, yet pervading all philosophy, as God pervades the universe. The memory may store itself with wisdom, and discover that to retrace the history of men is to take a retrospect of Providence. The imagination may find an infinite futurity, so certain as to stimulate its activity, so mysterious as to require it—a futurity over which its creative powers may brood, and bid the hills and the waters of a glorious abode arise, and plant in its Paradise the lost and loved, and bathe its scenes in the tinted light of an ineffable beauty. The affections may learn where to lean for an unbroken rest; how to become peaceful without being chilled; how to glow with intensity without risk of anguish or necessity of decline. Search human nature where you will, and something will be found suited to it in the gospel. In other words, the gospel is adapted to the spiritual wants of man.

And hence, if there be in the Christian world any system of doctrine which is identical with Christianity—if, amid the confusion of wrangling tongues, the original words of truth and grace may any where be heard—if, throughout our multiplying sects, there be any faith in which the true gospel lives, that faith must contain the same adaptation to the wants of the human mind which exists in the gospel. And all other forms of faith, in proportion as they diverge from the pure gospel, must manifest this adaptation in a less and less degree; so that we may measure their approximation to the truth by their accordance with human nature, and their tendency to min-

ister to its wants. And if, in comparing two modes of faith, we find that the one unnerves our moral powers, while the other braces them for conflict; that the one adds to our human troubles new and bitter solicitudes, while the other soothes to peace every suffering but that of sin; that the one shrouds the grave in more dreadful mystery, while the other makes it *to* all the needful passage to perfect life; that the one demands the extinction of an intellect that cannot be quenched, while the other opens to it new employment and boundless prospects; that the one assigns to all the good, in the mass, one and the same immutable reward, and to all the bad, in the mass, one and the same immutable punishment; while the other promises an infinite gradation of happiness, and so provides for human progressiveness; then are we furnished with a strong presumption that the former is a departure from the mind of Christ, the latter at least an approximation to it.

Now it has been said that a rational faith is at variance with the spiritual requirements of man; that it is incapable of creating holiness or imparting peace, or inspiring a living hope of heaven; that it is deficient in the very first requisites of all religion, and leaves in dreary desolation those departments of the soul which religion should refresh and enrich; that it provides no armor against the temptations, no reviving voice amid the despondency, no solace for the tears, no staff at the close of this life, and no shelter from the woes of another. This is a heavy charge; but we trust it may be shown that we are under no such infatuation; that we love our faith because it is all that our spiritual nature wants; that it warms, fills, and expands our noblest capacities; that it is a faithful guide to the everlasting home of the soul.

Let us, however, distinctly understand what is meant by the spiritual wants of man. What is it reasonable to expect that religion should do for us? We reply, first, man is an afflicted being and requires *consolation.* When the cloud is over him, its shade seems to brood over the whole creation, and he needs some revelation of light beyond; amid the storm that makes wreck of hope and comfort, he needs assurance of something more stable and serene. Among his trials we may reckon it one, that he is a mortal being, incapable of being satisfied with his mortality; for ever stretching forwards towards a futurity which is abruptly closed upon his sight; lingering in the warm precincts of a life from which he is torn by the cold violence of dissolution; and he needs bright views into the future, notices of living scenes beyond the land of silence, promises of employment and emotion commensurate with his high capacities. Secondly, man is a moral being, exposed to temptation and liable to sin, yet capable of infinite progress, and requires *motives;* he wants not simply the theoretical knowledge of good and evil, but practical wisdom to choose the one, and avoid the other; substantial checks upon his misdirected impulses, and effective encouragement to his nobler but repressed affections. He needs invitations to moral renovation and assurances of pardon for the past. His more aspiring energies often prove a feeble match for the thousand forces that draw him to the earth; when he has fallen, unless he has fallen for ever, he needs an uplifting hand; his dissipated strength must be re-gathered; his languishing penitence looks for some light of promise. To this, which seems to comprise all requisitions of nature, others would add that man is an accursed being,

and required a substitute. We admit no such want, and are not therefore bound to supply it. We see no traces of it in scripture, we feel no traces of it within us. We know of no curse in futurity, but such as may impend on each man's personal moral guilt; we know of none that may not be averted by personal moral reform; and discerning in our faith unequalled means of producing such reform, we deem it a faith mighty to save.

A rational faith supplies the consolations which man needs as an afflicted being. We know of nothing so likely to impart a genuine superiority to suffering as pure gospel views of Divine Providence. We totally reject the idea which men have found at the highest pinnacle of their presumption, that affliction is ever sent as a judgment for some unknown sin. If, indeed, the evils which men suffer are the obvious effect of their conduct, then we admit them to be of a penal character, inflicted, however, not in anger, but in love, not for the past aberation. but to guard against future guilt. He who sinks into poverty through profligacy, he who brings on disease by intemperance, he who loses his character in society by deceit, suffers the judgment of God; he is submitted to those distresses, which Heaven has linked to all that is wrong, to warn its children against its deceptive allurements. Neither our own afflictions, therefore, nor those of others, do we regard as evidences of God's displeasure, unless they are the natural fruits of sin. We do not think that one event is more providential than another, that any movement of creation has more design than another, that God is ever more immediately concerned in the production of one phenomenon than another. These views have given occasion to the charge of impiety, as if a

rational faith referred nothing to God, and made all things to be reducible to the cold, inflexible, unfeeling mechanism of matter. It is our firm belief that the majority of Christians, and especially the very persons who prefer this charge, trace far too little to God. They make his agency an occasional exception to the course of things. Most events are believed to take place without him, but now and then there is something which indicates the workings of his spirit, and is pronounced to be signally providential. Now we would go much further, and say that nothing can take place without God; that there is absolutely no power in the universe but his save that of the minds he has created; that nature is but his passive instrument, whose movements would be instantaneously arrested, were his living energy for one moment to retire. There is no exception, no distinction; no occurrence more merciful, more wise, than another. Though he adheres with undeviating uniformity to his general plan, though he now never breaks through it into the singularities of miracle to wake us from our slumbers of insensibility, yet every effect comprised within that plan is as distinctly designed by him, as if all his agency was directed to it alone. In every event there is all his wisdom and all his love, and every event is executed by the direct and immediate exercise of his power.

These principles have a direct tendency to lead us to God at all times. As all things are of him, and as he is love, all things must work together for good. This world is the perpetual theatre of his agency, and its darkness and its light are proportioned by him. The great object of his government we believe to be the formation of character; and whatever may purify the character, open the foun

tains of the soul, melt the obduracy of selfishness, expand to the skies the narrow circle of earthly hope, brace the enfeebled vigor of conscience, impart a consciousness of high and holy capacities, whatever, in short, can elevate our moral nature, should be welcomed as means and materials of ineffable joy. Often, it may be, the improvement of character is best promoted by the interruption of happiness; and then it is the part of love to enwrap us in the cloud. But perhaps there are no moments when the enlightened Christian is more melted by the conviction of Divine benignity, more vitally impressed with the sense of a Father's presence, more irresistibly uplifted in the sublimest spirit of prayer, than when, in the falling away of perishable comforts, he plants his foot amid the storm upon the rock of ages. The deeps of his nature are broken up, and the full flood of latent devotion streams forth upon his soul, sweeps away its impurities, till he emerges—a fairer, brighter, renovated being.

Among the afflictions of man, we may reckon it one that he is a mortal being, incapable of being satisfied with his mortality. It is the loftiest triumph of religion, that it can look with serenity into the grave, and one of the bitterest taunts that can be uttered against any form of it is the insinuation, that it is powerless in the last moment of life. Our expectations of eternity partake of the same moral features with our views of this life. We carry forward our convictions of the importance of character, to the new heavens and the new earth. We do not think that the recompense of futurity will consist in any accumulation of crowns and dignities and external pleasures, but in the natural fruits of virtue, in the free exercise of those very dispositions which are the appointed qualifica-

tion for admission within the heavenly gates. The sou knows no higher rapture than the deep glow which a filial devotion spreads through the powers, and the thrill of tenderness with which the beneficent heart gazes on the happiness of creation. When, then, the rational Christian is brought to the confines of this life, and almost lifts the veil, in proportion as he feels that he loves his infinite Father and his fellow-pilgrims, in proportion as he has disciplined himself by self-denial, and energetic beneficence, and inflexible integrity, and habitual reference to God, to enjoy the promised engagements and delights of futurity, in that proportion he is serene and trustful. For the occasional transgressions of frailty, the inadvertent lapses which may be thinly scattered over the past, he ventures to hope for the pardon of a parent who knows his frame. If they imply no habit, no tendency of the mind, he trusts to lay them aside with the slight coil of mortality from which he is about to receive a blessed liberation. He is going to a world whose employments are congenial to his tastes, and unalloyed by the imperfections, and undarkened by the clouds which mingled with the happiest moments of this preliminary being. He goes as to a home where his tossed and troubled spirit may rest at last.

A rational faith furnishes the motives to holiness, which man requires as a tempted being, motives to personal virtue, to the love of man, and the love of God.

We begin with maintaining the power of man to do the will of God. To us, God would seem a repulsive being, had he, the Author of our natures and the apportioner of our duty, rendered them irreconcilable enemies — had he, in the spirit of the Egyptian task-masters, at the same moment demanded obedience, and created a disqualifica-

tion. If human nature be utterly corrupt, the distinctions between guilt and virtue disappear; it is empty jargon to speak of flying from one and aspiring to the other; every motive to excellence vanishes, and the efforts to fashion the desires and affections, to conform them to a heavenly mould, must be as idle as so many strokes upon the rock. Virtue will never have a will till she has been endowed with a power.

This recognition of human capacity for obedience lies at the foundation of the importance we attach to morality. With us human duty is every thing; the main object of this life, the sole preparation for another. We not only deny that faith constitutes any separate condition of acceptance, but we think that faith is of no value, here or hereafter, except as a means of holiness; wherever holiness is found, involuntary error brings no danger; wherever it is not, faith gives no safety. We admit, indeed, that human virtue has no absolute merit, that it gives no claim to recompense, except on the Divine faithfulness; we trace to God alone all distinctions between right and wrong, all varieties in the distribution of enjoyment and suffering. But we believe there is a universal and changeless decree which connects together virtue and happiness, guilt and misery; a decree admitting of neither exception nor evasion; a decree which continues now as it ever has been, and will continue so world without end, which the sin of Adam could not modify, nor the death of Christ distort or annul. In certainty and accuracy it takes its place with the inflexible mechanism of the material universe; unerring and immutable as the laws which keep the planets in their orbits, and bind the ocean to the shore. This is the law which the great moral Governor

of the world holds ever before us through life; in which conscience reads his recorded sentence, which he will hold in his right hand, when we go before him to be judged according to our deeds. It may be concealed by the pleasures of sin for a season; doubted in the temporal woes of virtue; spurned amid the prosperity of fraud; forgotten in the delusions of selfishness; eclipsed in the blazonry of ambition. But it lurks in secret amid them all; it will survive their fragile triumph; it will flash in the lightnings of remorse hereafter, on those who have been blind to its mild light of guidance here. This eternal, this ever-active law makes no infinitely broad barrier between the accepted and the lost; it will not distribute the inhabitants of the unseen world into two well defined classes, the saved and the condemned. It will not separate by an infinite gulph the scarce perceptible shades of character which distinguish the least pure of the inhabitants of heaven from the least worthless of the prisoners of hell. It will rather proportion the measure of recompense to the amount of excellence, so that futurity will exhibit the same varieties in its happiness that are exhibited now in human character. That this is in the power of God no Christian can doubt. He who can weigh the mountains in scales, and measure the puny force that may poise an insect's wing, may at a glance discern the thousand differing hues that distinguish the assembly of the skies, and mete out to each its own variety of weal or woe. Not even repentance can interfere with the retributary principle of God's government, but is rather one of its applications. In so far as repentance produces virtue, it turns aside the penalties of sin. He that goes to his immortality a reclaimed and purified

being, is spared the future agonies of guilt, is admitted to the felicities of the court of God. But have all the consequences of his sin been annihilated? No; he has endured them in part in the bitterness of remorse and the struggles of reform; the rest he undergoes above; if not in suffering, at least in privation; for who can imagine that his position in the scale of happiness will be exalted as that of his brother who needed no repentance? Will he ever recover the place which he has lost? Will he ever, throughout an eternal progress, overtake the holier companions of his way, whose better speed has left him lingering in the heavenly race?

These views seem to possess an inherent grandeur which no misrepresentation can hide — an impressive solemnity with which none but the seared conscience dare trifle. They comprise a union of terror and encouragement, of equity and mercy, which adapts them alike to the presumptuous and the timorous. They extend their influence of fear or hope to every thing voluntary in life. Every thought, every desire, every act, brings with it its inevitable result — yields its contribution to the mysterious store of eternity. The happiness of obedience, the misery of vice, is alike infallible; every false step is an irrecoverable descent, every upward effort is a sure advance; awake, no enemy can surprise — asleep, no friend can save us. Proceed or tarry as we may, there is no point where the motive to good quits us, or suffers us to rest; wherever we are, there is always something more to be lost, and an infinity to gain; stand where we may, there are awful voices thundering from the depth below, and sweet beckonings from the spirits of light above, that urge us onwards.

The views supplied by a rational faith seem to be no less favorable to benevolence and social duty than they are to personal virtue. They lead us to think better of man than our brethren; the relation which God sustains towards him is, in our eyes, a relation, not of wrath, but of love. Hence we avoid one of the greatest dangers of the popular creed, that of becoming the narrow-hearted censors of mankind, looking with cold contempt on the herd of mortals that are about to be consigned to hopeless degradation. The moral world does not exhibit a transition more easy than that which slides from exaggerated notions of human corruption and misery to incurable selfishness and malevolence. Often, indeed, nature triumphs over error, and educes from the heart the free tide of love which an icy creed would freeze. Her triumph, however, has not always been complete; and history acquaints us with periods in which malignant deeds have suppressed her generous movements. Experience proves, no less than reason, that the more degraded the opinion that is entertained of human nature, the less reverence is there of human happiness and life. Shall the condemned prisoners, who are about to be swept away to the dungeons of the universe, be loved associates to those who are the chosen ministrants of the palace of God? Shall man love that whch God holds aloof? Impossible! Human nature is fit only to be spurned, trampled on, scorned, insulted; to take the same place in the esteem of man that it holds in the wrath of God; to be used for the good of the elect, to be sported with awhile, while it is yet trembling on the brink of the abyss. Contrast with these views the sentiments with which a more cheerful faith enables us to look on creation. God is love in his own

nature, and extends his love to every creature. Wherever there is a conscious being, there is an object of divine benignity. No error, no guilt can alienate God's love; it may indeed change its manifestations; it may bring it down in forms of chastening terror or purifying woe upon the soul; but all is an expression of kindness. Do we live on the face of this varied earth, and mingle with its busy throng? It is no outcast world lying in exile from its Creator, but the lower mansion of God's house, the abode of his bright presence, the habitation of his favored creature, man. Do we meet with the erring and the ignorant? Where is our infallable truth, where our universal knowledge, that we should be designated with those whose errors the Father of Light can pity, and whose ignorance does not alienate his love? Do we turn away in anger from the child of guilt? The child of guilt is still the child of God, as loved and cherished as ourselves. All creatures are the ceaseless objects of his love, and he can love nothing that is worthy of our hate.

And if we do not gather from a rational faith a supreme love of God, then must we have hearts which no sublimity can awe, and no tenderness can melt. The essential peculiarity of our views with respect to God is, that we totally deny the existence of any wrath or vengeance in his nature. We repudiate with disgust the idea of vindictive punishments. In casting from us the belief in these we cut out all that can withdraw or check our love of the Infinite Father. And how does God appear before us? Whatever has at any time kindled our veneration, whatever has thrilled us with deep love, whatever has awed and hushed our spirits, we give to his unimaginable nature. To us he is the fountain of all that is beau-

tiful and great, from whose thought the heavens and the earth instantaneously sprang. To us he is the eternal life of the universe, who rolls the oceans and breathes the winds, and speeds the radiance of innumerable worlds, whose energy is awake in fields beyond the stellar light, and, while it numbers the pulses of an insect's life, walks the zones of the universe, and sees that all is good. To us he is the Parent of the human soul, ever spread through its powers, and waiting for its prayers, and ready for its love; bracing the vigor of the intellect; kindling the glow of the affections; upholding the leaning spirit of the penitent; never tired with hearing the broken utterance, and soothing the passionate griefs, and cooling the burning shame of his confessions, and tranquillizing the impatient spirit of his aspirings; unfolding before us the dignity and duration of the imperishable mind, and spreading before it his own glorious infinitude, at once the inspirer of its progress, and the unattainable limit of its career. And shall we not love this Being? We believe that to love him perfectly, to cast down before him every emotion that can thrill the soul, to harmonise our minds with his through the imitation of Christ, his image, is the best peace that earth can give, and heaven will never take away.

What then, we would ask, is wanting to a rational faith? If it takes away the sting of death; if it leads us so to repose on Providence, that come what may, our souls shall not be deeply troubled; if it give such dread views of sin, and such glorious promises of endless progress in what is good, as to stimulate to all personal holiness; if it afford such bright views of human nature and condition, as to invite a warm sympathy for our fellow-

men; and if it so fill our conceptions with the attractive glories of the Infinite Father, as to lead us to him as children, what more can it do? Having blessed us on earth, will it be found to fail when we are summoned to heaven? Will the Being we have venerated, refuse us there the light of that countenance we have loved? Will the brethren who will not acknowledge us now as of one faith, refuse to dwell with us in the assembly of the skies? Blessed be God! there will be no coldness, no bigotry, no exclusiveness *there;* intolerance, ashamed of its folly, and ignorance of its presumption, will learn at last, that heaven is wide enough for all the good.

1st Series. No. 131.

THE

THIRTEENTH REPORT

OF THE AMERICAN

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE ANNUAL MEETING,

MAY 29, 1838.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.
JUNE, 1838.

Price 6 *Cents.*

I. R. BUTTS.....PRINTER.....2 SCHOOL STREET.

THIRTEENTH ANNIVERSARY.

The American Unitarian Association celebrated its thirteenth anniversary on Tuesday evening, May 29, 1838. The members met for the transaction of business, at half past six o'clock, in the Berry Street Vestry, the Rev. Dr. Nichols, president, in the chair.

The records of the last annual meeting were read.

The Treasurer's Statement of Receipts and Expenditures was then presented, and accepted.

Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the American Unitarian Association, from May 30, 1837, to May 28, 1838.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 30, 1837, .		$3011 66
From 22 Life Members, ...	568 00	
" Auxiliary Societies and Subscriptions, ...	1866 42	
" Donations, from Societies and Individuals, ...	276 18	
" Sale of Tracts, ...	246 45	
		2957 05
		$5968 71

EXPENDITURES.

For Printing Tracts and Paper, .	$1417 34
" Mr. Judd, for a Tract, ...	20 00
" Sundry incidental expenses, . .	77 81
" Rev. Charles Briggs, for travelling expenses, ...	50 00
" Aid of the Western Messenger, . .	100 00
" E. Q. Sewall, for Tract, . .	20 00

Rev. Mr. Farmer, for Missionary services in Georgia, ...	$50 00
" C. A. Farley, for services in the Western States, ...	100 00
" F. W. Holland for services in New Hampshire, ...	20 00
" A. C. Muzzey, for services in do.	20 00
" E. Peabody, for services in Mobile,	100 00
" S. G. Bulfinch, for do. in Pittsburg,	60 00
" H. W. Bellows, for Missionary services at the South, ...	50 00
" Mr. Kinsley, for Missionary services in New Hampshire, ...	10 00
" W. G. Elliot, for aid to the society in St. Louis, ...	200 00
In aid of the society at Ipswich, . .	50 00
Rev. W. H. Channing and Rev. Chandler Robbins, towards defraying expenses to Washington, ...	65 00
In aid of the society at Alton, Illinois, .	100 00
Rev. Stephen Farley, for Missionary services in New Hampshire, . .	50 00
" Mr. Thompson for do. do. at the West,	200 00
" " Russell for preaching at Lancaster, N. H., and elsewhere, . .	60 00
" " Emmons for do. at Erie, and do.	200 00

In aid of the society at Fitzwilliam, . .	100 00	
Rev. A. D. Jones, for Missionary services in Illinois, ...	100 00	
" Mr. Sears for do. at Toledo, Ohio,	150 00	
In aid of the 2nd parish in Saco, . .	50 00	
For Rent of Room for Agent, and Clerk hire.	133 34	
Transferred from the General Fund of the American Unitarian Association, being about the amount presumed to have been credited to the General Fund, which was intended for the Agency, ...	1206 00	
		4759 49
Balance,		$1209 22

HENRY RICE, *Treasurer.*

Boston, May 29, 1838.

BOSTON, MAY 29th, 1838. The subscribers have examined the above account, and found it correct and properly vouched.

Signed, THOMAS TARBELL, HENRY B. TOWNSEND. } *Auditors.*

The following officers for the ensuing year were then chosen.

OFFICERS

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

1838 — 39.

PRESIDENT.

Rev. Ichabod Nichols, D. D. Me.

VICE PRESIDENTS.

Hon. Joseph Lyman, Mass.
" William Sullivan, "
" Charles H. Atherton, N. H.
" Stephen Longfellow, Me.
Henry Wheaton, Esq. N. Y.
James Taylor, Esq. Penn.
Henry Payson, Esq. Md.
Hon. William Cranch, D. C.
Martin L. Hurlburt, Esq. Penn.
Hon. Samuel S. Wilde, Mass.
" Samuel Hoar, Mass.
Timothy Flint, Esq. La.
Hon. Lemuel H. Arnold, R. I.
Benjamin Bakewell, Esq. Penn.
H. J. Huidekoper, Esq. Penn.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Rev. Samuel Barrett,
" George Ripley,
" Chandler Robbins, } *Directors.*
Rev. Charles Briggs, *General Secretary.*
" Samuel K. Lathrop, *Assistant Secretary.*
Henry Rice, Esq. *Treasurer.*

Agreeably to the 10th Article of the Constitution, the following gentlemen were then chosen COUNCILLORS of the American Unitarian Association.

John G. Rogers, Esq.
Hon. Stephen C. Phillips,
Rev. Jason Whitman,
John Prentiss, Esq.
James Kendall, D. D.
Rev. Alonzo Hill,
James Walker, D. D.
Hon. Sydney Willard,
Rev. George Putnam,
Rev. Ephraim Peabody,
Rev. Henry A. Miles,
Rev. Moses G. Thomas,
Henry Ware, Jr. D. D.
Francis O. Watts, Esq.
Francis Alger, Esq.
George Bond, "
Benjamin Seaver, "
Peter Mackintosh, "
Samuel May, "
Henry B. Rogers, "
Albert Fearing, "
Hon. Jonathan Phillips,
Robert G. Shaw, Esq.
John Lamson, "
Rev. Artemas B. Muzzey,
Francis Parkman, D. D.
Rev. Ezra S. Gannett,
William T. Andrews, Esq.

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The past year has in some respects been unfavourable to the operations of this Association. Many of its plans of usefulness have been delayed, and some perhaps frustrated, by the pecuniary embarrassments of the country. And yet it has been a year rich in lessons of instruction; and has led many to think less of the uncertain objects of the world, and to value more highly that faith and those hopes which are built upon the rock of ages. Your Committee therefore, in looking back upon this period, perceive indications of good coming out of evil. They find that they have not labored in vain; — that many spiritual wants have been supplied — many prejudices removed — many hearts made to rejoice — and many souls, as they trust, purified from error and sin, and brought nearer to their Saviour and their God. And in presenting this Report, they see abundant reason for devout acknowledgment to our heavenly Father for the blessing which has attended their efforts to promote the cause of truth, and advance the kingdom of his Son.

It gives us pleasure to state that a growing interest is manifested in the objects of the Association; — that many of our Societies, which a year since were quite indifferent to them, (because they knew but little of the work in

which we are engaged,) now heartily cooperate with us, and afford us substantial aid; and that a true missionary spirit is increasing in our denomination; from which we anticipate the most happy results.

With the view of learning the condition and wants of our churches, and of those who sympathize with us, the Secretary has carried on an extensive correspondence. We have thus collected from different parts of the country many interesting facts and much valuable information, which will be of essential service to us in our future plans and operations.

The Committee attach great importance to the formation of Auxiliary Associations. They regard them as a powerful means of disseminating divine truth, and awakening an interest in religion. They have often witnessed their good effects in promoting Christian union and spiritual growth in our Societies; and they cannot but express the wish that they may be multiplied.

The Secretary has devoted much of his time to delivering addresses, and forming such Associations. His object was to make known the condition, prospects, and wants of the denomination in the less favored parts of the country, and to do all in his power to awaken a spirit which will afford the means of supplying those wants. And in this his labors have been abundantly blessed.

The friends of our cause have been multiplied. And we have been encouraged and animated in our labors by the sympathy and generous support we have received, as well as by our prospects of increased usefulness. Instances of liberality towards the Association are too numerous to be mentioned. A few will suffice to give some idea of a feeling on the subject, which is somewhat extensive.

A lady was asked if she would visit Saratoga Springs. She inquired what would be the expense of a journey there. And was told that it would be thirty dollars. 'Thirty dollars!' said she. 'That sum would make me a life-member of the American Unitarian Association. No. I cannot go this year.'

After an address of the Secretary in one of our neighboring cities on the spiritual wants and moral dangers of the country, the mayor of the city spoke eloquently upon the necessity, in a civil point of view, of such objects as the Association is engaged in, and remarked that those objects were of vital importance to the moral growth, the freedom and salvation of our country. He likewise expressed his interest in the Association by liberally aiding its funds.

A Sabbath School teacher, who, in the bloom of youth, was wasting away by consumption, said to her clergyman, as he stood by her bed-side, that she had fifty dollars which she wished to devote to some charitable object; and that having looked around upon various objects, she had come to the conclusion that she could in no way do so much good with it as by giving it to the American Unitarian Association. She left the same sum to furnish fuel for the poor widows of the parish; and died as the saint dieth.

A most estimable and highly esteemed young clergyman, whose hopes of usefulness were suddenly blasted by ill health, and who sought in the islands of the South relief from the rigors of a Northern winter, which seemed fast consigning him to the tomb, felt in his last moments, as indeed he had long felt, that nothing was of so much importance as the promulgation of the precepts of Jesus,

the consolations and hopes of the everlasting Gospel; and accordingly made provision in his will for a generous bequest to the Association.

The travels of the Secretary the past year have been confined to the New England States. He delivered addresses to about forty societies, and aided in forming thirty-one Auxiliary Associations; re-organized five; and addressed four. He preached, too, occasionally to destitute societies, and did the work of a missionary. Some of the Auxiliaries recently formed, are among the largest connected with the parent Association. The one at Lowell has 142 members; and is the largest in any single society. The one in Providence, R. I., has nearly 200; but it is composed of persons from two societies. The one at Dorchester, in the Rev. Mr. Hall's society, has 136 members; and the one at Roxbury, in the Rev. Mr. Putnam's society, 130.

The number added to the list of life members during the year is 32. Making in all 306.

There has been an increasing demand for our publications. We have published the past year about 70,000 Tracts. They have become more known, and been more duly appreciated throughout New England. And in other and more distant parts of the country the call for them has been frequent and urgent. We have, too, had applications for them from different parts of Europe. We have sent some to Greece; where it is believed they will do good. A very intelligent gentleman from Athens called on the Secretary, and expressed a great desire to know more of our views of religion, and to make his countrymen acquainted with them. He had recently

heard a clergyman of our denomination preach in Philadelphia; and was delighted with some of the views he gave of Deity. He was particularly struck with a remark like this, 'that God does not, as a tyrant, require us to obey his commands, for his own sake, for any good that would accrue to *him*, but solely for *our* good; and because he loves us.' Such views of God, he said, would be highly acceptable to the people of Greece; and he doubted not but Christianity, as understood by us, would be embraced by many of them. We gave him copies of all our publications, which he gladly took with him to his native city, where the religion of Jesus was preached by Paul; believing that they contained the doctrines of the Gospel in somewhat of the purity in which they fell from the lips of that Apostle.

There have been, during the year, reprints of six Tracts. The last of which was by one of the early friends of the Association, and one of the most successful promulgators of our faith; who, since our last annual meeting, has been called from his philanthropic and pious labors on earth to the reward, we trust, of the faithful in heaven. The name of Worcester, 'The Friend of Peace,' will long be honored in our denomination, and in all denominations. A 'Tribute to his Memory,' by the Rev. Dr. Channing, as just as it is beautiful, is contained in one of the recent publications of the Association.

There are a large number of societies in our denomination which are able to give but a partial support to the institutions of religion. Their churches are necessarily closed from three to nine months of the year. But many, indeed the most of them, with a little temporary assistance would increase, and in a few years be able of themselves

to support public worship permanently. There are in New England between thirty and forty such societies; of which, as it will be seen from the Treasurer's Report, we have afforded aid to only nine. About the same number have received assistance from the Evangelical Missionary Society and other sources. From fifteen to twenty societies are, therefore, without the stated ministrations of the Gospel. And the evils they thus suffer can be adequately known only to those who have experienced them. We cannot but feel for such communities. And they certainly deserve the sympathy and aid of our more favored societies.

We have afforded assistance to new or destitute societies in the following States: In Massachusetts, 1 society; Maine, 1; New Hampshire, 6; Connecticut, 1; Pennsylvania, 2; Ohio, 1; Kentucky, 1; Illinois, 2; Missouri, 1; Alabama, 1; and Georgia, 1. In all 18.

We have employed the past year fourteen Missionaries. This is double the number employed by us the year previous. Most of them, however, went on short missions, of a few months, and, in some instances, only of a few weeks. Six preached in the New England States; three at the South; and five at the West. They went forth to the work full of faith, and in the spirit of their Master. They were kindly received and cordially welcomed wherever they went. In several instances they formed societies and gathered churches. Among their hearers were many who before seldom attended public worship, and had long neglected the institutions of religion — many who had unhappily mistaken the errors and corruptions of Christianity for Christianity itself; and who rejoiced to find it altogether a different system from what they had supposed

it to be. We have, therefore, the satisfaction to know that a large number have thus become deeply interested in religion; who probably never would have embraced it in any other form — would have passed their days without the believer's hope; and gone down to their graves unsanctified and unblessed by the religion of Jesus. We rejoice and bless God, that we have been able to send the richest of blessings to our distant and destitute brethren — to those who have left their homes, their school houses, and churches, and all the good institutions of New England, and gone to places in the far West, where the Sabbath bell is not heard, and where they have most of all things felt the want of those religious blessings they once enjoyed.

Several places in Georgia were visited by our Missionaries. They found many of our faith, who heard them gladly, and who are desirous of having permanent preaching among them. In the course of the year it is thought a good society will be gathered at Macon; and that societies will soon be established in other parts of the State.

Alabama has been visited by one of our Missionaries. And the accounts we have received from there are highly gratifying. The Society at Mobile, under the preaching of Mr. Bellows, has, during the past winter, greatly increased, and promises to be one of the largest societies in the city.

At New Orleans a subscription was commenced last year by the Secretary for a church. — And one would no doubt have been erected before now, and a large society gathered, had it not been for the pressure of the times, which has been peculiarly severe in that city. That object, however, we are assured by our friends there, will not be

long delayed. There are other places in Louisiana, particularly Alexandria and Jackson, where there are Christians of our views, and where it is desirable preachers should be sent.

The West presents a broad and rich field for Missionary enterprise and usefulness; much broader, indeed, than we have the means of occupying. And it is a source of deep regret, that we can do comparatively so little towards meeting the wants of our brethren there, and executing a Christian influence upon that very interesting part of the country.

We have made an appropriation in aid of the Western Messenger, edited by the Rev. Mr. Clarke of Louisville, Ky. It is an interesting and useful publication, and has been instrumental of much good, and we cannot but express the wish that it may have a wider circulation here as well as in the West. We have made an appropriation to the Rev. Mr. Eliot of St. Louis, in consequence of his valuable missionary services in Missouri and Illinois. We have afforded aid to the Rev. Mr. Farley's society in Alton, Illinois; which has suffered extremely by the times. Its numbers, however, have increased; and a deeper interest has been manifested among its members. We have afforded aid to the society recently formed at Hillsboro', Illinois, where the Rev. Mr. Huntington is now laboring with great success. We have made an appropriation to aid the Rev. Mr. Emmons in his missionary labors in the western parts of Pennsylvania. The Rev. Mr. Thompson of Salem has gone on a mission of four months, and the Rev. Mr. Jones of three months, into the Northern parts of Illinois.

Among the places in the West where our preachers are wanted, and where they would be very useful, are Nashville, Tenn.; Owensburg, Ky.; Chicago, Quincy, Tremont, Pekin, and Peoria, Ill.; Dayton, Columbus, Cleveland, Toledo, and Zanesville, Ohio: and Erie, Penn. The Secretary has been requested to send a preacher to the latter place, where, it is believed, a society will soon be formed. At Toledo, a place of growing importance on the western shore of Lake Erie, Mr. Sears preached the last six months, and awakened so deep an interest, that the society, although as yet small, proposes building a church.

The Book and Pamphlet Society continues to supply its depository in a great measure with selections of our Tracts. There has been a great demand the past year for its publications. According to the Report of its efficient and devoted Secretary, 12,639 Books and Pamphlets, including Bibles and Testaments, have been circulated. And they have done much to promote the cause of truth and holiness; particularly in the new and distant parts of the country.

The Ministry to the Poor in this city was formerly connected with our Association, and we have always felt a deep interest in it. It is in some respects the most important work in which Christians of our denomination in this part of the country are engaged. It blesses the rich as well as the poor — for it is a source of satisfaction and spiritual improvement to all who interest themselves in its objects and aid in its support. No sooner was it perceived a few weeks ago that there was a great want of another chapel, than a subscription was opened, and a large part of the requisite funds were immediately sup-

plied. One gentleman of the city subscribed 2000 dollars. We made an appropriation some time since for the support of a similar ministry in Louisville, Ky; but the work has been delayed for want of a suitable person to take charge of it. When our funds will admit of it, we hope to engage in the same work in other places in the West.

We have corresponded with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and exchanged publications. The following extract of a letter just received from one of its Secretaries, the Rev. Edward Tagart, will show that our English brethren have many evils to contend with which are happily not experienced by us.

'It delights and cheers us to receive the accounts, which you and Mr. Barrett unite in giving, of the progress of our views in the Western parts of your vast continent, of the success of your journeyings as a missionary, and the formation of new societies in various important towns and cities in the States. I wish it were in our power to reciprocate the good intelligence. But the circumstances of this country are wholly different. In every district of our country the established church maintains a position, which interest, fashion and authority combine to strengthen. It may be that among the orthodox dissenters there is an undergrowth of what in a large way I may call liberalism; but the utmost caution is used on all sides in manifesting the approaches to it; while those who are committed, as the Unitarians most publicly known, of course are, to a decided religious dissent, are viewed with an eye of fear and antipathy.'

We sincerely sympathise with our English brethren; and rejoice, that notwithstanding their discouragements,

and unrighteous oppressions by church and state, they nobly persevere, and are untiring in their efforts to dispel a darkness which belongs to other times, and make known a purer faith; — and especially that they are doing so much to supply the moral wants of their country, to support the institutions of religion, and reform the age.

It is obvious that enlightened views of religion are rapidly advancing in our own country; — and a better spirit too is beginning to prevail among Christians of different sects and denominations.

The Association, we are happy to state, has been able to do more the past year than in any two previous years. And according to the Treasurer's Report, it will appear that all our funds have not been expended. We have, however, made several appropriations, and some of them quite large, which have not yet been called for, which will nearly exhaust our Treasury. But we trust that the friends of religion will afford us the means of further usefulness: — will again strengthen our hands and encourage our hearts in the great and important work in which we are engaged — a work which has for its sole object the moral improvement and salvation of men.

The Committee have had loud and frequent calls for aid in building up religious institutions in the West. From the repeated declarations of others, and from the personal observations of the Secretary, it appears to us that too much importance cannot be attached to this object.

The Rev. Mr. Eliot, of St. Louis, remarks thus on this subject: 'When we speak of the importance of establishing religious and moral institutions at the West, now, before it is yet too late, we feel as if no words can be too

earnest; exaggeration seems almost impossible. We think that we are not liable to the charge of presumption, when we say, that every citizen of the United States, no matter where he lives, or to what sect he belongs, ought te feel a deep interest in this cause, and use his strength to the utmost in every wise mode, for its promotion.' 'If any religion ever prospers in the West, it must be one at the same time rational and fervent, for men both reason and feel strongly there; it must at the same time be free from bigotry and full of zeal; and such is our faith when truly understood.' 'It is easier to prevent than to cure. By comparatively little exertion now, institutions may be built up, which will be instrumental in giving a tone to public feelings and morals, and, perhaps, of saving our country from the greatest troubles. The character which is assumed by the West, during the next thirty years, that is, by the generation which has now begun to grow up, will probably be a permanent one. At the present moment it is capable of being made more noble and elevated than any other in the world, if proper means are taken; all the elements, all the opportunities are there; but if left to go on at hazard, the degradation may be great, like that of the arch-angel ruined. If the time should ever come, when irreligion and licentious freedom prevail over that great region, and hold their blighting rod over the whole nation, O, how will the men of that day mourn, that their fathers did not send out a moiety of their wealth, to aid in building up the churches of Christ, which, as a little leaven in the measure of meal, would have leavened the whole mass! Now, happily, is the time, not for regret or self-reproach, but for activity and Christian sacrifice.'

A similar declaration of the great importance of this

work, is given by the Rev. Mr. Peabody, late of Cincinnati, Ohio. 'I see before me,' says he, 'a vast empire growing up — rapidly — in a night — composed in great part of the young, composed almost altogether of those whose object is to seek their fortunes. I see them sometimes neglectful of their religious wants — sometimes heedless of them, sometimes struggling against almost insurmountable difficulties to supply them. I see multitudes of the young from our own New-England surrounded by perils of which they are scarcely conscious. Is it strange that I look to their mothers, their fathers, their kindred in New-England for aid in shielding them from danger? It may be as irksome to us as to any one, to solicit the benevolent action of others, but I see around me spiritual wants that cry aloud, as if the spirit of God were speaking in the midst. I remember that soon you and I and all now on the earth will have passed into a state of being in which our temporal interests will be nothing, in which the soul will be all in all, in which a contribution or an effort made to save a single soul will be more grateful to us than the memory that we have possessed the honor or wealth of the world. I remember that in that future world we shall meet again in the presence of God and of souls saved or lost through our care or neglect, and I do not hesitate to call on our brethren for aid.' 'Every one may aid in this holy work, each in his own way, one by writing, another by the contribution of money, another by the preaching of the word. The division of labor that exists in modern times, renders it necessary that *all* should join in such a work. And all *can* join. By the contribution of means, the mechanic at his bench, the farmer in his field, the merchant in his counting room, becomes, not

less than the preacher, a missionary of the Gospel. Let *all* join. And ages to come, with grateful hearts, will utter thanks for the labors of this generation.'

The Committee, from a wide survey of the religious condition and wants of the country, lack words to express the importance they attach to this work. They see many, thousands in distant places cut off by their situation from the Christian privileges which the people of New England enjoy. They see many a neglected field in the vineyard of our Lord — many a destitute society — many a devoted Christian struggling hard amidst reproach and scorn and persecution to support the religion of his fathers and uphold the ark of God. They behold a vast extent of country capable of the highest degree of spiritual improvement, but thickly beset with moral dangers; where Christians of all denominations should now be sowing the good seed, and building up those religious institutions which alone will save from sin and guide to heaven the multitudes that are fast gathering there; and which alone, too, will preserve the peace, the order, the freedom of the country. Thus impressed, as we are, with the magnitude and necessity of our work, we cannot but call upon the denomination — upon the clergy and laity, upon societies and individuals, upon the young and the old, upon all to put into our hands the means of blessing our country and the age, and the generations that shall come after us. Yes. With a deep and solemn sense of our and your responsibility; feeling that by our fidelity or negligence eternal consequences are depending, we call upon you, and beseech you to show yet more and more your faith by your works — to sympathise with your less favored breth-

ren — to aid the cause of truth and righteousness — and build up the waste places of Zion; that the wilderness and the solitary place may be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. Our prayer to God is, that we may do all that in us lies to bring men to a knowledge and obedience of the truth, and bless them with spiritual, with heavenly blessings; that Christians may learn to love one another, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; and so to labor in the cause of Christ and for the advancement of his kingdom, that, by the divine blessing, his reign may be universal — that 'at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess him to be Lord to the glory of God the Father.'

After the reading of the Executive Committee's Report, by the Secretary, the President of the Association, Rev. Dr. Nichols, rose and addressed the meeting. He heartily congratulated the brethren on the interesting occasion, expressed his sense of the honor they had conferred on him by electing him to the office he held, and assured them that they had his cordial sympathy in their objects and efforts. He then proceeded to remark upon the great duty of spreading the gospel, according to the command of the Saviour on his leaving the world. He urged cogent arguments for the performance of this duty by Christians generally, drawn from the facts, that, miracles aside, the facilities for propagating the religion are vastly greater now than they were when the first heralds went forth; that its efficacy in enlightening, sanctifying and saving men, is more and more manifest as age suc-

ceeds age; and that the remarkable superiority of those nations which have been christianized, over others, attests the value of the gospel and justifies all possible exertions to extend its influence. From general considerations of this kind, in which all Christians should find motives to strenuous efforts, he passed to others that ought to have weight with Unitarians in particular. And here he contrasted the present with the past, and showed that since the time when the gross corruptions, which had, in ages of darkness, found their way into the church, began to yield before increasing light and improved methods of investigation, there had been a gradual and progressive advance towards what he would call Unitarian Christianity, and that now this form of religion is fast becoming the one generally demanded by intelligent minds. After dwelling on these topics, he went on to urge the reasons and motives for combined, associated efforts. Christianity, he said, had never been advanced as an abstraction, and seldom without fraternities. Whoever would accomplish much for the diffusion of the gospel must join some denomination, and act in concert with others. Let every one connect himself with that whose views are most like his own. No one will do well to stand aloof from all. To be isolated is to be impotent, while in union of hearts and hands there is strength. It has been said of liberal christians that they have lacked zeal; and perhaps with some truth. But he believed there had been much exaggeration on this point. Their peculiar circumstances had not been taken sufficiently into account. Be this however as it might, they could not now excuse themselves, if they refused to act together earnestly and efficiently for the spread of the gos-

pel. This they owed to themselves and to the truth. The times also demanded it at their hands. Being in many respects peculiar, they required special action. First, said he, Christianity is now thrown upon the *voluntary* good will and efforts of its friends for support. Many have met the exigency with commendable zeal. We have been, perhaps, too much disposed to let our sentiments take their course, and exhibited a degree of jealousy, as to social operations, more philosophical than practical. In consequence, peculiar hardships have been suffered by such of our small, insulated societies, as were unable to maintain themselves in the enjoyment of christian institutions, and generally the progress of the pure gospel in the country has been slower than otherwise it would have been. He was happy to witness now encouraging proofs of an awakened interest and increased zeal on the part of Unitarians, and suggested that a wise regard to the times would cause them to make still greater exertions.

Again. As the spirit of inquiry and mental independence increases with the progress of knowledge, and the press exerts more and more of an influence on the age, it becomes a higher duty for all Christians to be up and doing in order to recommend their religion to the *understandings* of men. This duty he urged, as peculiarly incumbent on those Christians who have, as they think, the most rational statements to present; — and the more so, in consideration of the infidelity of the age, which is of a character to be met successfully by such only as possess the pure truth and the generous temper of the gospel. Much has been said of infidelity; but he thought little was to be feared from it, in its present aspect, pro-

vided it be encountered with the spirit of genuine Christianity.

Further, the times are less propitious to an arbitrary theology and polemic strife, than they were; consequently they are favorable to Unitarians — assuring them of a friendly reception, when the practical character of their system is understood. Go through the length and breadth of our land, and you will find nothing so feelingly said on the subject of religion as — 'give us something that will meet our practical wants. For this purpose, it must be solemn — it must be sacred — it must unfold the duties of men and enforce the observance of them. Let us have a religion our hearts can feel, and by which society will be reformed. We do not think your speculations of so much importance concerning the Godhead, as that a powerful impression be produced that religion is divine, and its requirements infinitely wise and good.' This, which has always been the voice of the intelligent, and is increasingly that of all denominations and of all good men, formed, as he thought, one of the strongest arguments for that rational scheme of religion which is characterized by the inculcation of these very ideas. He dwelt on this point, illustrating the practical tendency of Unitarian sentiments. He spoke of what he had himself witnessed in the course of a thirty year's ministry — said he had seen the effects of those sentiments upon the various classes of society — and he was convinced that they were calculated to tranquillize and purify the mind during life, and to administer consolation at its close. He bore his testimony, that he had never known them to be insufficient. He referred to the death of an illustrious individual in this city, as showing the power of this re-

ligion to cheer and sustain the soul in the parting hour; and said that to the names of Newton, Locke, and Milton, who had died in the faith, — might now be added the name of Bowditch. He concluded with urging motives to increased exertions, arising from the circumstances of our country — especially the great West — motives suited to quicken all Christians — but particularly Unitarians, in the work of extending the influences of that blessed religion, which is the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation.

*** Justice to Dr. Nichols requires it to be said, that the above report of his address is an exceedingly imperfect one, as regards both thought and language.

Rev. Samuel Osgood moved the acceptance of the Report, and addressed the meeting as follows —

Mr. President, — In moving the acceptance of this Report, my task is a short and simple one. I would gladly dwell upon those cheering statements there presented, which give such encouraging views of our past efforts, and such auspicious omens of future success. I would gladly speak of the growing liberality of other denominations towards us. For it has been my good fortune to meet with proofs of liberality from all denominations of Christians In the far West I have been permitted to raise my voice in the church of him, who more than other men, is regarded as the impersonation of Old School bigotry in this country; and among the granite hills of New Hampshire I have joined in the devotions and preached the Divine Word in the humble chapel of the brethren of Wesley. We may all rejoice, that the day is near, when all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, shall regard each other as brethren, and the anathemas of un-

charitableness shall cease. I would gladly speak of the fresh and vigorous spirit that is springing up in the heart of our own denomination, and enlarge upon the cheering fact, that our preachers are going forth in the power of the truth, and carrying the gospel to the remotest borders of our country; that they are giving up that negative style of preaching, that wars with error, and have become the zealous apostles of positive truth; — that they are not solicitous to cater to the tastes of a fastidious academical criticism, but are determined to utter boldly the truth in Jesus, in the face of rich and poor, wise and simple, and hold up the cross as the banner around which all humanity ought to rally. Themes like these, I would gladly dwell upon, but I must leave them to those who shall come after, and proceed to discharge a duty, alike dictated by friendship and by regard for the cause, that has brought us together.

You alluded, Mr. President, in the course of your remarks to the death of the lamented Bowditch, as of one whose memory should be dear to this Association. Allow me, sir, to revive the remembrance of one, whose name, though not known to fame as was that philosopher's, yet marked a spirit equally as pure. You will remember that among the interesting tokens of the zeal of the friends of our Association, it was stated in the Report that a young clergyman recently deceased, had made a liberal donation to our funds. Though he sleeps the last sleep, and his lips are silent in the grave, he yet has a voice for us; and let us listen awhile to the voice of him, who being dead, yet speaketh.

Our departed friend was a living, as he was a dying memorial of the worth of the faith, which we as an Asso-

ciation hold dear. In early years, he was impressed by its mild and inspiring doctrines. And although at one season of life his attention was anxiously turned towards a sterner theology, his good angel bore him through the trial, and strengthened his convictions of the truth and blessedness of rational Christianity. With ardor and constancy he devoted himself to the studies of the Christian ministry. His spirit seemed the more earnest, the more he studied and meditated. He travelled in foreign lands, and those scenes in European cities, that have seduced so many from fidelity to their principles, and chilled the zeal of so many ministers of the gospel, seemed only to give new ardor to his faith, and to make him bless God that he had been born in New England. The wildness of German theological speculation did not entice him from the simplicity of Evangelical faith: the blandishments of Parisian dissipation did not lead him to despise the frugal habits of the land of his birth. His was not that childish piety, that could live only in the nursery of sober New England morality; it could stand alone, and feel itself strong, when viewing the splendors and corruptions of foreign cities. He returned from his travels, eager to preach the word that was glowing within him. But Providence willed otherwise, and decreed that he should not be spared to speak the truths of Jesus, save in the pure language of Heaven. Calmly, gradually he sank to his rest. Consumption marked him for its victim — that syren disease, that soothes, even while it destroys, like that bird of India, whose pinions fan the fatal wound she makes.

He rests in an isle of the Southern Seas.

His faith was ever his blessing and strength. It animated him in life, it sustained him in death. In the Gethsemane of his sufferings it led him to the ministering angel. Over the cross of mortal disease, it pointed out to him a crown of Heavenly glory.

Fresh in our hearts — at this hour of sympathies and resolves, fresh be the memory of Henry Walker. More has been said, than his own gentle and humble spirit would have allowed. But not too much for his deserts — not too much for our needs — not too much to make us bless our faith and urge us to work, as we can, for its diffusion. Our brethren will pardon a townsman and friend these imperfect remarks.

> Deep for the dead the grief must be
> Who ne'er gave cause to mourn before.

Rev. Mr. Brownson then said, — Mr. President, I rise for the purpose of expressing my sympathy with the objects of your Association, not with the hope of saying anything that may be listened to with interest.

I have listened, Sir, with deep and thrilling interest to the Report which has been read, and the remarks which have been offered. They assure me that you have been doing a good work, that your exertions in the cause of liberal Christianity are beginning to be attended with a good share of success.

We live, Sir, in an age and in a country in which men have outgrown the old forms of religious faith. Men are becoming conscious of new wants, wants too deep and urgent to be satisfied with mere forms, and which can, and will have something more real and living than mere formulas. They demand a living religion, one which

grows out of the higher instincts of our nature, and which shall meet a response from the universal heart of Humanity.

The religion your Association, Sir, professes to have, is a religion of this kind. It is because the religion held by the body of Unitarian Christians is professedly able to meet these new and urgent wants of the soul, that I view it with interest and rejoice in its spread. If I mistake not, it is the form, and the only form, in which Christianity can become really prevalent in this country. As I view it, it commends itself on the one hand to the most advanced understanding, and on the other to the most active religious instincts of the heart.

This, Sir, is not and cannot be, an infidel country. There is at this moment no great amount of absolute infidelity among us. But there is lurking under the old forms of superstition, which have no longer any but a mechanical life, and can be sustained only by artificial methods, much indifference to religion, great want of true, active, living faith. Yet, Sir, the American heart is a religious one, and the American mission is one not to be achieved without a fervent and living religion. But it must be a religion like the institutions of the country, a free religion, resting for its authority, not on tradition, not on precedent, or historical recollections, but on the native instincts of the human heart, on the voice of God ever sounding out from the depths of the individual conscience. A religion of forms, a religion that comes to us from abroad, that rests on an arbitrary authority, is not in harmony with our free institutions, and can take no permanent hold on the American heart.

This country is entrusted with a great and glorious

mission for Humanity. To discharge it with promptness and success, it must have religion, and a religion in perfect unison with that mission. This religion you are undertaking to carry to all parts of the country, or rather to quicken in the hearts of all our countrymen. It is a great work, Sir, — a noble work. It may be a difficult one, and not to be easily accomplished. Your forces may be weak, your members few, and your means scanty. But you need not be discouraged by the apparent disproportion between your means and the work to be done. Remember, Sir, the answer of Jesus to his followers. They saw a world lying in ignorance, superstition and vice. They were then few; the difficulties to be encountered rose as a lofty mountain before them, and they shrunk back in dismay. 'Had ye faith as a grain of mustard seed,' said Jesus, 'ye might say unto this mountain, "be removed and planted in yonder sea," and it should obey you.' Whatever the magnitude of your work, the difficulty of your task, go to it with a firm faith, with full confidence of success, attack the mountain with energy, and it shall give way before you, and your success be easy and certain.

The age of miracles may be thought to have passed away; but so long as there is faith yet living in the human heart, miracles shall not cease to be wrought. There is a power in a firm and living faith little dreamed of by this age. A power the extent of which no one has ever yet imagined. Go to this work then, Sir, with all the energy of the human soul, not doubting your success, and omnipotent power shall work with you, and ensure you full and complete success. Whoever labors with all his might in the cause of Humanity, has God himself for his

helper, and however feeble he may seem, he can do all things.

Sir, with a deep sense of the greatness of the work in which you are engaged, with this faith in its successful prosecution, you shall carry, — nay, *quicken* in every American heart, a pure and living religious faith; you shall dispel the darkness of superstition; cure the prevailing religious indifference; the wide-spread but lurking skepticism, which now so paralyzes the exertions of the friends of Humanity.

Much is said of infidelity. Sir, I have had some experience in relation to it. I think, Sir, I know something of its causes, and of the means of its cure. I could, had I time, relate numerous instances of individuals, who, under my own preaching in this city, have been converted from a supposed infidelity to faith in God, Christ, and immortality. I say from *supposed* infidelity, for no man is or can be a real infidel. No man lives who does not believe in God. No man who knows this country, and is aware of its mission, can really fear the long continuance of even this *supposed* infidelity. But I have learned enough from my own experience to know that they who regard themselves as unbelievers, and they who, though neither so regarding themselves, nor so regarded by others, yet have no active faith, are to be converted to the christian faith only by having Christianity presented to them in the living forms in which you profess to present it. The elements of that faith are in every heart. Let me then urge you to new and greater exertions. Cease not from your efforts till you have reached every American heart, and gathered every son and daughter of this Republic into the fold of a religion that bases itself

on man's spiritual nature, and gives him free scope for the exercise of all his faculties. You have done much for this, you are doing much, and may God speed you.

Mr. Brownson was followed by George Bond, Esq.

Mr. President, — I have listened to the reading of the Report with great satisfaction. It augurs well for the Association, well for liberal christianity, well for the state of religious feeling in our community. It is not my design to enter at large into its merits, but to confine my remarks within narrow limits.

Permit me, Sir, to premise, that I was not an advocate for the formation of this Association. On the contrary, I had great misgivings as to its practical effect. About a year before it was established, the project was discussed in a meeting of some fifteen or twenty gentlemen, when I opposed it with earnestness, and was glad to find myself in the majority.

I opposed the measures, Sir, because I had witnessed so many institutions founded with the best designs, resulting in little good and much positive evil, and some, in which the evil might almost be said to be unmixed with any redeeming quality — because associations of men, especially for religious purposes, are apt to become bigoted and intolerant, and wholly to disregard the rights and feelings of others.

In saying this, Sir, I mean no reflection on any class of Christians, for so strong seemed to me the tendency to such results, that I had come to regard it as almost inevitable. I feared Unitarians might not resist it — that with them too, the glory of the sect might ride over higher considerations, and our common Christianity suffer in the conflict.

Indeed, Sir, while I cordially render the meed of praise to those who persevered in their design of founding the Society, and to the practical wisdom and Christian spirit of those who have managed its affairs, I cannot but attribute much of their success to a combination of circumstances which has produced a more enlarged and Christian spirit throughout our land. I am happy, Sir, here to acknowledge that my apprehensions have thus far not been realized.

The proceedings of each successive anniversary almost, have discovered more and more regard to practical religion, and I doubt not have had their influence in disarming prejudice and securing the respect of our opponents. The Association has done much to gain for itself a good name. I am not of those who consider it of little importance what a man believes; on the contrary, I regard the views entertained by Unitarians generally, as eminently fitted to meet the wants and to purify and elevate the character of man. It is not therefore, in my estimation, a small thing that many valuable Tracts have been sent abroad, exhibiting and illustrating these doctrines; though a higher value may be attached to those on practical subjects.

It has done what it could, in sending forth missionaries to the West, and it has fallen to my lot to know, that many hearts have thus been comforted and much good been effected. After what has fallen from the gentleman who preceded me, I ought not to say more on this topic. But, Sir, the coming glory of the Association, is the establishment of the ministry to the poor. Whatever may have been done before, no systematic plan had ever been devised and executed, to afford the blessings of the

Christian ministry to that large number in every city, who either do not care to enjoy it, or for want of means, are deprived of the privilege. Had it done only this and then ceased to be, it would nobly have merited the thanks of the community; but it did more, it continued to afford its counsel and aid till it had raised up another Association to sustain this noble enterprise of Christian philanthropy.

The result I need not tell you. Similar institutions are growing up in other cities of our land, and even beyond the Atlantic, and I trust the period is not far distant, when a ministry to the poor will be found in every city and town in Christendom. Then may we hope, that not only our own sect, but all sects and all classes, the rich as well as the poor, shall bless the day when the American Unitarian Association took its place among the religious and philanthropic institutions of our country.

For myself, Sir, though opposed to its establishment, I have long regarded it with favor, and now, having nothing else to give in aid of its designs, I cordially bid it God speed.

Mr. E. H. Sears then addressed the meeting.

I wish, Mr. President, to say a few words — and as the hour is exhausted, I shall say *only* a few — in reference to that portion of the Report which pertains to missionary labors in the West. For the last six months my labors have been confined to Toledo — one of those young and growing cities which are springing forward with so much rapidity in the course of commercial enterprise and improvement. This place furnishes one example among many others, showing how urgent is the demand for early

and efficient action — and how much may be done through the agency of this Association, if we begin at the right time and in the right way. Toledo is situated upon the Maumee — a beautiful river flowing through a fertile territory into Lake Erie at its western extremity. From its peculiar location, which secures to it the most rare advantages for commercial intercourse, this city promises at no very remote day to become one of the greatest thoroughfares in the western world. It will become a centre of influence, and whatever opinions shall there prevail will penetrate more or less a wide-spreading community. — Well, what shall that influence and those opinions be? That, Sir, depends very much upon the exertions of the present moment. When I commenced preaching in the place I found that two small congregations had been gathered — one Methodist, the other Presbyterian. But out of a population of two thousand and five hundred, not two hundred attended upon the stated preaching of the gospel. The highest and the lowest classes — the extremes of society — were neither of them reached by any of the religious influences there exerted. Christianity as it was then administered found no responding sympathy among men of intelligence and refinement. Here was certainly a field for our exertions — not as sectarians, but as friends of the christian religion. I commenced preaching. At the end of six months we have a society stronger than any other society in the city, full of confidence in their complete success, and proposing to build a church during the coming summer. In ordinary times they would do so from their own resources. At the present time it will be impracticable without aid from abroad. But such is the interest felt and the willingness to act, that individ-

uals, men of wealth and a magnanimous generosity, stand ready to pledge their private property to any amount demanded, provided the loan of a few thousand dollars could be obtained. Our great need is a church. Little more can be done for the society until we have a convenient place of worship. Now, Sir, carry forward the fancy, say ten years, and see what this place is to become. It will then be what Buffalo now is; for ten years ago the latter place, with certainly no superior commercial advantages, was what Toledo now is. And it depends entirely upon these early efforts of ours, this day of comparatively small things, whether Christianity, reigning in its free and liberal spirit, shall then be the prevailing religion of the place, sending abroad a pure and commanding influence throughout a wide and an opulent community. If you foster this society, if you extend to it that aid which this precious moment of its exigencies demands, you may secure that consummation so much to be desired. If you desert it, it falls, and the privilege of opening here a fountain of influence which shall extend far and wide, and go down through future years, is forever gone.

One word more; let me not detain the audience at this late hour. The gentleman who preceded me called the establishment of the ministry to the poor, the peculiar glory of this Association. I regard it, Sir, as the peculiar glory of a liberal and pure christianity, and I look here for that healing and cleansing influence which must go down to the low places of society, for the purpose of thence raising and hallowing the human mind. I spoke of a second class — the lowest — which, in that section where I have been laboring are not reached to any considerable extent by the orthodox influences which there prevail.

We had contemplated the formation of a Sabbath School, from among this very class. While our neighbors there have been shouting the party-cry of sect and denomination, and denouncing us as the enemies of Christianity, I have burned for exhibiting a practical refutation of the slander, by extending the blessings of that Christianity to those fellow-beings who live within the sound of this warfare, and yet hunger for the bread of life. Should we become strong enough for the effort, I trust this work will yet be attempted by some of us who may feel that sentiment burning in our souls, a manifestation of which the Saviour referred to as proof of the divinity of his mission. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor."

Rev. Ephraim Peabody rose and remarked, that something had been observed in the Report and in the remarks of gentlemen that had preceded him, of the importance of sending preachers of our views to the West. 'All that he had heard and all that he had seen had only convinced him more and more of the importance of doing this. But at this late hour, he would refer but to a single objection sometimes made to the objects and operations of the Association.

What have we to do with the West? — it is asked, We are weary of the word. Let others take care of themselves. We have calls enough upon us here; let us, before we think of things at a distance, take care of wants at home. And so let it be. But where is our home? Where, parents of New England, are your homes? Wherever your affections are. Wherever your children are. Home depends not on soil and sky; it is wherever

the sentiments of the heart lodge and dwell. No matter where your children go, be it a thousand leagues into the wilderness, the place where they open the earth to the sun, and scatter the seed and rear their dwelling, is no longer a strange place to you. It is transformed, transfigured by the affections, and you have an interest in the welfare of the region round about, made binding and sacred by parental love.

And where are the children of New England? They are scattered over the whole land. You cannot enter an inlet of Florida, where, if a new city is springing up, you will not find them. There is not a village along the lakes, where you may not meet those who have gone almost from your very door. Through the whole course of the Mississippi, from St. Anthony's Falls to the Balize, there is not a place where business is doing, or to be done, where in the busiest throng you will not constantly hear the familiar sound of New England names. The very graves of the West, already beginning to be peopled with your children, tell of the mighty tide that has been pouring in, and call on you to be up and doing. In the Protestant grave-yard of New Orleans (and it but serves to illustrate the number of emigrants who go out from among us to spread over the whole western land) of those buried there, of whose native place mention is made, one-fourth are from New England, and one-fifth from Massachusetts There is probably hardly one who hears me, who has not some relative in the West; and there is no father of a family who must not expect that one or more of his children will find a home beyond the Alleghanies.

New England, by doing her part, in helping to supply the moral and religious wants that exist along the rivers

and prairies of the West, is providing for the wants of her own descendants almost as certainly, and sometimes, if possible, more effectually even than when she rears school-houses and churches in her own borders.

Thus situated, it is surely most natural and right, that your children should call upon you from beyond the mountains for aid, in their hour of need, and on our side, we ought to feel it to be a privilege — a blessed privilege — to be permitted by Providence, according to our ability, to give that aid.

The church was well filled, and the audience was remarkably attentive. The prayer by the venerable Dr. Bancroft, the former president of the Association, was appropriate and impressive; and a deep interest was manifested in all the exercises of the evening. Had it not been for the lateness of the hour the Rev. Mr. Peabody would have spoken at much greater length; and Mr. Waterston and others, would have spoken on important and interesting subjects connected with the operations of the Association. After the addresses, the Report was accepted; and the meeting was closed by singing the 'Dismission Hymn.'

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

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1. The name of this Association shall be THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

2. The object of this Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country.

3. Unitarian Christians throughout the United States shall be invited to unite and co-operate with this Association.

4. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription shall be paid; and a subscription of thirty dollars shall constitute a person a member for life.

5. The officers shall be a President, fifteen Vice Presidents, a General Secretary, who shall have the care of all the business and interests of the Association under the control of the Executive Committee, an Assistant Secretary who, in case of the absence or sickness of the General Secretary, shall perform such duties of a Recording and Corresponding Secretary as may require immediate attention, a Treasurer, and three Directors.

6. The Directors, Secretaries, and Treasurer, shall constitute the Executive Committee, who shall meet once in each month, and shall have the direction of the funds and operations of the Association.

7. An annual meeting shall be held at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall deem advisable, of which due notice shall be given, and at which officers shall be chosen, reports be made, and any other business be transacted, which may come before the Association.

6. The Executive Committee shall have power to fill any vacancies which may occur among the officers between any two annual meetings.

9. Any amendments of this constitution shall be proposed at one annual meeting, and may be accepted at the next anniversary, if two thirds of the members present be in favor of such amendments.

10. There shall also be a Council of the Association consisting of not less than twenty-five, nor more than seventy-five members, to be nominated by the presiding officer, and chosen by a hand vote at the annual meeting, whose duty it shall be, whenever it is necessary, in conjunction with the Executive Committee, to consider and determine what further measures may be taken to increase the usefulness of the Association, by what means they may be carried into execution, and in what manner funds can be provided for the purpose. The Council shall hold a stated annual meeting on the Thursday succeeding the annual meeting of the Association, at four o'clock, P. M. The Executive Committee shall call special meetings whenever they shall deem it necessary, or at the request of any five members of the Council; and twelve members shall constitute a quorum. The powers of the Executive Committee, with regard to all matters not acted upon by the Council are to remain the same as heretofore.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, September 23, 1826, as amended March 18, 1830.

Resolved, That every member of the Association be entitled to one copy of every tract *of the first and second series*, published by the Association *during the year for which his subscription is entered.*'

Vote of the Executive Committee, passed January 4, 1826.

'*Voted*, That no society be recognised as auxiliary to this

Association, the terms of subscription to which are less than those required in the Constitution of this Association.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, June 20, 1833.

Voted, That the 4th Article of the Constitution be so construed, that any one who shall pay thirty dollars for the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association, either at once, or by annual instalments within five years, shall be considered a life member.

CLERGYMEN MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

The following Clergymen have been made members for life of the American Unitarian Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

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Allen, Joseph.
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Bartlett, John.
Barry, William.
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